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Major plans wide-ranging reforms for Scotland

Exclusive interview: PM says package to be introduced within weeks

DONALD MACINTYRE
Political Editor

Detailed government proposals for constitutional change in Scotland, which could give Scottish MPs new powers to debate and vote on their own affairs, will be disclosed by the Government before the end of the year.

In an exclusive interview with the Independent, John Major said he was hoping to announce the outcome of Ministerial discussions on a reform package "within a very few weeks".

The Prime Minister refused to give details of the surprise plan last night, but his disclosure will invite immediate speculation that the plans could give Scottish MPs alone the right to debate and vote on some measures specific to Scotland before they are approved by the Westminster Parliament.

The reform package is designed as an answer to the much more far reaching Labour

he was considering "very carefully indeed" the idea of a new-style standing committee to examine the controversial Asylum and Immigration Bill. He strongly criticised Tony Blair, the Labour leader, for raising the idea of the committee in exchanges in the Commons on Wednesday, rather than proposing it privately to him before the Queen's Speech Debate and said that it would "break new ground", since such committees were normally reserved for non-contentious legislation.

But he said he was examining the idea as a possible means of ensuring the passage of the Bill did not inflame fears among ethnic minorities and that he would announce his decision "within a few days". The Prime Minister said that "you would be wrong to assume that I am just routinely going to come back and say no. That was not a commitment to say 'yes', he added, "but because I do want it to be a matter of proper asylum procedures, I am looking carefully at what the practicalities are".

Mr Major added that if he did agree to the proposal the Labour Party would say that "We forced the Prime Minister to change his mind." He added: "If I change my mind will because I am concerned about good race relations." The Prime Minister also disclosed that he hoped to submit detailed proposals to John Bruton, the Irish Prime Minister, to revive the summit which was aborted two months ago and which would include an international commission on arms decommissioning, along with preliminary talks leading to full all-party talks early next year.

Mr Major made it clear he was still holding firmly to the precondition that the IRA should take a first step to banding over arms before talks could begin. But he insisted: "People should take me at face value. I want all party talks and I am trying to get them."

And the Prime Minister, who robustly dismissed Labour charges that his government had "lurching to the right", went out of his way to quash speculation that he was on the brink of ruling out British membership of a single currency in the lifetime of the next Parliament. He made it clear that he was not prepared to give up its capacity to argue its case over how a



Changes ahead: John Major in Downing Street yesterday

Photograph: Edward Webb

single currency might affect countries outside monetary union as well as inside it. He said: "What people are asking me to do is to surrender British influence on an important policy. I am not going to go to surrender British influence on an important issue of policy."

On constitutional reform the Prime Minister said he had committed himself to a series of important but "gentle and evolutionary" constitutional reforms, including publication of full Cabinet Committee lists, reforms of Parliamentary procedures and opening the Security Service to scrutiny.

On Scotland, he declared that he had been struck at how little coverage in London the assembly proposals of the Scottish constitutional convention had been given.

It was an "important event" even though he disagreed with the proposals.

'Today' finds there is no tomorrow

MATHEW HORSMAN
Media Editor

Rupert Murdoch is closing Today, his loss-making newspaper, after running up £140m in accumulated deficits since 1988. The media magnate, who controls four other national titles in the UK, is also raising the price of the Times from next Monday in an effort to improve profitability at his London-based News International.

The decision to close Today shocked staff at the title's Wapping headquarters, despite persistent rumours since the summer that its future was in doubt.

The final issue of the title appeared this morning. The company said it would try to transfer as many of the 300 staff as possible to other Murdoch titles, which include the Times, the Sunday Times, the Sun and the News of the World.

Staff said yesterday they expected fewer than 100 employees to remain. "We are in a state of shock here," said one senior journalist, who was only told officially of the decision at 4pm.

"We deeply regret the decision to cease publication," Les Hinton, chief executive of News International, said. "But with a modest circulation, insufficient growth and rapidly rising costs we have no alternative."

Soaring newspaper costs have put all newspaper publishers under increased pressure during the past 18 months.

Richard Stott, the editor, is believed to have been offered a large six-figure pay-off. He told employees that he was not going to the Daily Express, despite rumours that he would replace its outgoing editor, Sir Nicholas Lloyd.

"I want to stay in newspaper journalism," Mr Stott was said to have told his staff.

Analysts said the decision reflected Mr Murdoch's belief that the title could not be turned around, and that Today's 500,000 readers might be encouraged to move to other News International titles.

An offer for the newspaper

from controversial Harrods owner, Mohamed al-Fayed, was rehuffed last summer. Alan Frame, the former managing editor of the Sunday Express and now Mr Fayed's media adviser, confirmed that the offer was renewed yesterday, but elicited no response.

"We were prepared to keep the paper open, and could have saved 300 jobs."

The price rise at the Times will mark the end of the circulation price war, launched by Mr Murdoch in mid-1993 in order to build market share, particularly at the expense of the Telegraph and the Mirror Group.

Senior executives at both groups privately welcomed the news, suggesting that the end of the war would give all newspapers a chance to improve profitability.

Mr Murdoch is believed to need additional cash to help finance his growing media empire in Asia, particularly at Star TV, the satellite broadcaster.

That view was strengthened by the news that retailers will see their margins on the sale of the Times narrowed to just 10p per copy, from 11.9p before.

News of Today's closure sparked wild speculation in Fleet Street that a major realignment of the newspaper market had been launched. Mr Murdoch was rumoured to have been at the offices of the Daily Mail, and to have launched a bid to take a 25 per cent share of United News and Media, owners of the Daily Express and Sunday Express, as a first step towards bringing the titles to Wapping. The rumours were never formally denied by the Murdoch camp, but were discounted by insiders at News International and the Express.

Shares in all newspaper companies climbed sharply last night, on expectations that cover prices would be increased. The Telegraph group, which yesterday unveiled sharply lower profits for the first nine months of the year, said it would raise its price, probably to 40p, on Monday.

Newspaper's death, page 5

Serb leaders are charged with genocide

TONY BARBER
Europe Editor

The Bosnian Serb leaders, Radovan Karadzic and General Ratko Mladic, were indicted yesterday on charges of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity for the massacre of up to 6,000 Bosnian Muslims near Srebrenica.

The United Nations war crimes tribunal in The Hague

described the killings as "one of the bloodiest acts of the war in former Yugoslavia, involving crimes of unprecedented cruelty against the Bosnian Muslim population".

The indictments, which could disrupt United States-sponsored peace talks being held in Dayton, Ohio, relate to the period last July when Bosnian Serb forces overran the United Nations-declared "safe area" of

Srebrenica in eastern Bosnia. Muslim men and boys of fighting age were separated from women and children, herded out of Srebrenica and executed in what appears to have been the single largest slaughter of unarmed people in Europe since the Second World War.

"These crimes were committed by the Bosnian Serb forces under the control of

Radovan Karadzic and under the command of Ratko Mladic, who was seen on several occasions in or outside Srebrenica where systematic mass killings took place," said Christian Chatter, a spokesman for the United Nations war crimes tribunal.

Evidence indicated that more than 100 Muslims had been slowly killed by Serb soldiers with knives, while the bodies of

several thousand others were buried in mass graves.

It was the second time in four months that the tribunal had charged Mr Karadzic and General Mladic with the war crimes.

The two Serb leaders were accused on 25 July of crimes against civilians throughout Bosnia, including the sniping campaign against residents of Sarajevo, and of taking United

Nations peace-keepers hostage and using them as human shields.

However, bringing Mr Karadzic and General Mladic to trial may not be easy for the UN tribunal.

They are believed to be somewhere in Bosnian Serb territory, but the two men have almost completely disappeared from public view since the Ohio talks opened two weeks ago.

11-year-olds shun homework for TV

BY JUDITH JUDD

Nearly half of all children leaving primary schools have never done any homework, according to a major new study to be published today. Instead, they spend their time watching television and playing computer games.

The study by the National Foundation for Educational Research into the homework habits of 2,300 11- and 12-year-olds found that 43 per cent of the former (final-year primary pupils) said they were never given homework and 64

per cent of the latter (first-year secondary pupils) were doing less than an hour and half.

Nearly 80 per cent of the primary children said they spent two or more hours a day watching television, but 11 per cent spent as much as six hours a day.

Computer games were a daily pursuit for 43 per cent and one in ten were "hooked" on four hours a day.

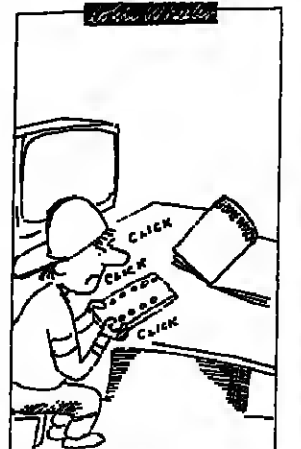
Just over 3 per cent of the primary pupils who filled in confidential questionnaires for the study admitted that they were given homework but did not do it. The researchers also looked

at children's attitudes to school and found that the vast majority - particularly girls - enjoyed it and liked their teachers, although nearly half said they had been bullied.

The 12-year-olds, interviewed at the end of their first year in secondary school, were only slightly less enthusiastic than the 11-year-olds.

Nearly a third of primary and 20 per cent of secondary pupils said they watched the clock because they were so eager for lessons to end.

Sue Harris, one of the report's



IN BRIEF

Ecstasy girl dies
The 18-year-old ecstasy victim, Leah Betts died yesterday when her life support system was turned off. Page 3

University change
Students could apply to university immediately after they receive their A-level results under proposals for a new two-stage system. Page 2

Lloyd's man's millions
Peter Middleton, who stunned Lloyd's of London with his resignation on Wednesday night, could earn £10m in three years as the chief executive for Europe at Salomon Brothers, the US investment bank. Page 22

Hick gets ton
A century from Graeme Hick helped England to a score of 221 for four in the First Test against South Africa. Page 32

Today's weather
Sunny with a chilly northerly breeze and some wintry showers. Section Two, Page 33

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section TWO

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Universities devise new entry system

JUDITH JUDD
Education Editor

Students would be able to apply to university immediately after they receive their A-level results under proposals for a new two-stage system being drawn up by universities.

At present, those wanting to start university in the year they take A-levels have to apply during the previous December for entry in September, a few weeks after A-level results are published.

But Tony Higgins, chief executive of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) yesterday said a new procedure could be in place for those starting A-level courses the year after next and aiming at university entry in 1999.

University vice-chancellors will next month decide on proposals for a two-phase entry. Mr Higgins told a seminar for careers teachers at Wolfson College, Oxford, that the first phase of students could apply during the first half of the

spring term, after they had sat their rock A-levels.

One of the reasons why the system needed reform, he said, was that 65 per cent of A-level grade predictions made by teachers were proved wrong.

Under the proposals, students who applied in the first phase would have four choices of university or college instead of the present six and would only be allowed to hold one conditional offer instead of two.

"Only a per cent of entrants come from their second choice. It is just a waste of space," he said.

The second phase would start in May and continue until the end of September, so that students could wait until after they received their A-level results in August. They would then be allowed three choices, which would be sent in order to the three universities.

The present "clearing" system, in which students have to find out where places are available and join the scramble to secure them in late August and

September would therefore disappear.

If the vice-chancellors agree to the proposals, Mr Higgins and his officials will work out the detail and consult interested parties.

Schools are keen to change the system to reduce the uncertainty for applicants who have to gamble on getting the right grades. Universities have so far been cautious. They worry that there may not be enough time to process all the applications after A-level or to interview candidates in those subjects where interviews are essential.

The new proposals are a compromise between the two points of view. Mr Higgins said that, initially, most students would probably apply during the first phase but he hoped that growing numbers would realise that applying after A-level made sense.

He told the seminar, organised by Cambridge Occupational Analysts: "The present system can lead to real unfairness. Admissions tutors start in-

terviewing in the autumn term. Some fill up on the first come first served basis; though, if we hear of it, we come down on them like a ton of bricks. Others reject some early candidates because they know some equally good ones will come along later."

A Government-commissioned report to be published next week will show that higher education applicants with advanced vocational qualifications (GNVQs) are generally well prepared for their courses.

IN BRIEF

School truancy leading to crime

More than 7 out of 10 children hunk off school and a quarter play truant at least one day a week, a Home Office-funded survey has found.

The study of 1,106 pupils found that a significant number of truants were involved in crime or were drawn into illicit activities such as under-age sex and drug-taking.

However, the report, *Truancy - The Partnership Approach*, said that when initiatives by the police, schools, local authorities, and retailers, were carried out crime fell, school attendance improved and town centres became safer.

IRA kidnap fear

Police in Northern Ireland were last night searching for a man believed to have been snatched by an IRA punishment squad. John Hegarty, 19, had earlier been questioned by police about the theft of £16,000 worth of Christmas savings from a church community centre in Strabane, Co Tyrone.

Sea birds killed

Marine pollution experts are investigating an oil slick which has killed sea birds in Dyfed, west Wales. The oil is affecting about eight miles of coast between Cefn Sidan beach and the Penrhay country park. The bodies of about 45 cormorants and guillemots have been found.

Pilots disciplined

Two Britannia Airways pilots who flew an empty Boeing 767 away from the normal flight path in order to pass over the home of the first officer to greet his wife have been disciplined by the airline. Capt Hugh Carmichael has resigned from the airline and former first officer Michael Stanley has lost seniority and faced "severe disciplinary sanctions" over the incident which occurred at Congleton, Cheshire, on 30 October.

Murder inquiry

Police in Warwickshire were last night questioning four people in connection with the murder of 15-year-old Naomi Smith in Anslow Common, near Nuneaton. Naomi was stabbed and sexually assaulted at a recreation ground near her home on 14 September.

Cleaner beaches

Britain's bathing beaches were their cleanest ever this year, with 89 per cent meeting the European Union's legal standard for sewage pollution, compared to 82 per cent last year. By law they should all comply next year - but it is highly unlikely that they will.

Bouncing with health

Young women should jump on the spot 50 times a day to prevent the onset of brittle bone disease in later life, according to a report by Dr Joan Bassey, of the Queen's Medical Centre, Nottingham, published in the *Annals of Rheumatic Diseases*.

Ford walk-out as pay offer is turned down

BARRIE CLEMENT
Labour Editor

More than 1,000 Ford workers yesterday staged unofficial stoppages in protest at an inflation-breaching "final" pay offer worth a minimum of 9.25 per cent over two years.

The walk-outs came as the Government announced that the inflation rate had dropped from 3.9 per cent to 3.2 per cent, compared with a proposed increase at Ford this year of 4.75 per cent.

Union leaders, who will be expected to repudiate the wildcat action or face stiff legal penalties, professed surprise at the militancy of their members at the Dagenham assembly plant and the normally moderate employees at Southampton.

Senior officials at the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union predicted that while the two plants would revert to normal working today, other divisions of Ford UK, including the parts delivery service based at Dagenham, might decide to emulate yesterday's "spontaneous action".

Union leaders at the Bridgend and Halewood complexes were minded to accept the company's proposals during 12 hours of negotiations on Wednesday, but they were outvoted two to one by representatives from other Ford works.

Plant representatives are to meet next Wednesday to consider the results of a consultation process and are expected to call for fresh negotiations with management. Some union insiders believe the company will not improve its offer unless there is a substantial majority for industrial action in a ballot.

The proposals would give the 22,000 hourly-paid Ford workers a 4.5 per cent rise next year, or the inflation rate, plus 0.5 per cent, whichever is high-

er. Management also proposed improvements in pension entitlements, but refused to countenance a reduction in working hours from 39 to 37 hours.

Tony Woodley, chairman of the union negotiating team, said yesterday's stoppages were genuinely spontaneous.

Indeed, union officials declared their surprise at the degree of anger shown by some of their members, but said production workers nationally had been responsible for a 100 per cent improvement in productivity in 10 years.

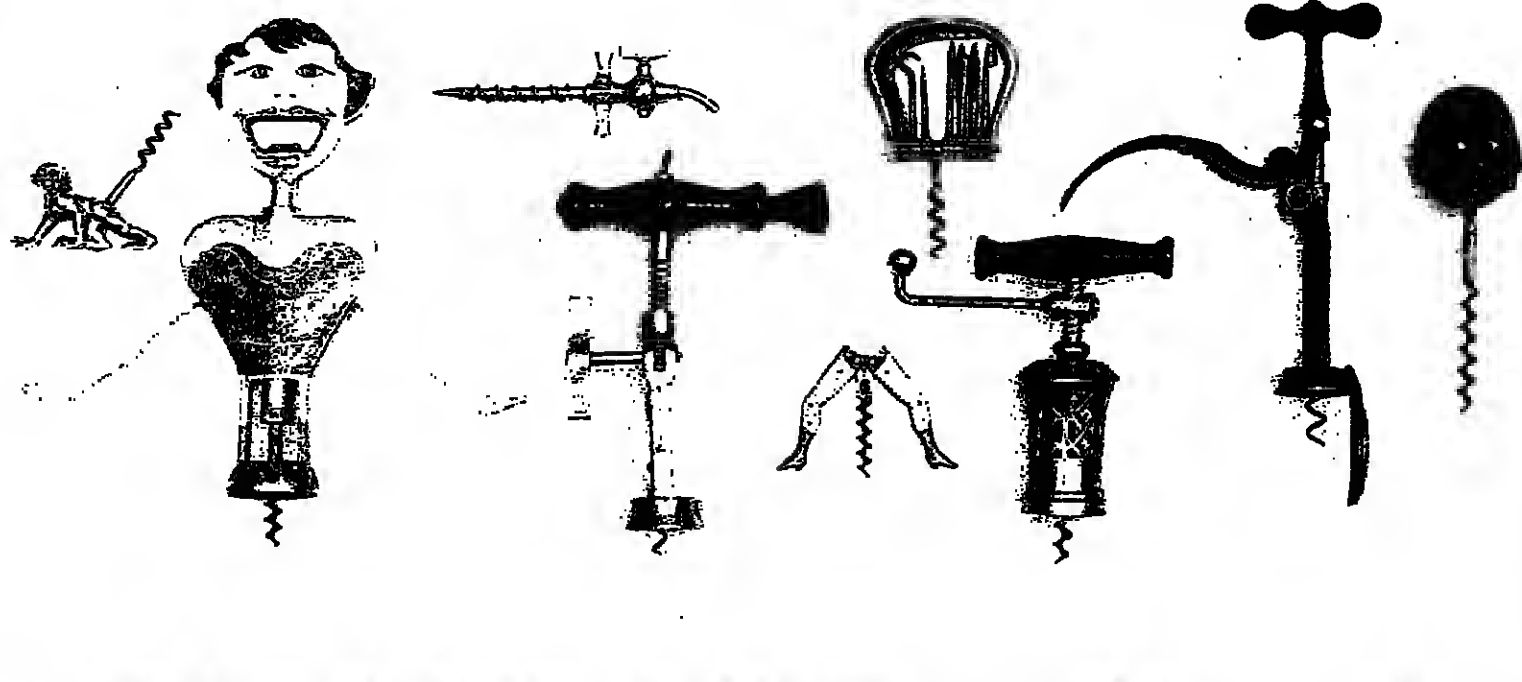
In the Dagenham plant, there has been an 84 per cent improvement in four years, according to a union official. "This is not a theoretical calculation. The lines have speeded up and the lads are sweating their bollocks off," he said.

Ford's proposals will nevertheless fuel expectations elsewhere and will make it more difficult for ministers to keep the lid on inflation. Under the proposals, most production workers would get an increase of £27 a week in the first year.

A spokesman for Ford said he was disappointed that unofficial action was taking place, at a time when the offer was still being considered. "We hope that normal production will be resumed as soon as possible". The spokesman estimated that the company had lost 800 Fiestas because of the strike at the Dagenham and about 60 Transit vans at Southampton.

"We are standing by what we said in the negotiations, the offer is final. We are not prepared to move on a shorter working week and we have proposed generous improvements in pay and pensions."

Union leaders are expected to announce on Monday a majority for strike action at Vauxhall, in protest at a 7 per cent two-year offer.



A lot of bottle: Part of a collection of antique corkscrews to be auctioned at Christie's in London on 22 November

Photograph: John Voos

Siamese twin boy dies during separation

One of the Siamese twin boys born in London five days ago has died during an eight-hour operation to separate them and the other is fighting for his life. It was disclosed yesterday, writes Glenda Cooper.

No Siamese twin born with a fused heart has ever survived, but surgeons said yesterday there was a good chance of the surviving twin, who is now in intensive care, making a recovery.

The "incredibly complicated" surgery took place at Great Ormond Street Hospital in central London. The twins, from Kuwait and born five weeks premature, had been joined from the breastbone to the navel and had fused hearts and livers.

The consultant paediatric surgeon Mr Edward Kieley, who led the operating team, said: "I

think we're quite pleased to have one baby alive... We knew there was always going to be the potential that the second one would die. We were quite concerned that both would die, as has happened with conjoined hearts before."

A paediatric surgery professor, Lewis Spitz, and a consultant cardiac surgeon, Marc de Leval, also took part in the 12-hour operation.

The twins had been delivered by Caesarean section at Queen Charlotte's Hospital, west London, last week before being transferred.

It was the first time the team, the most expert in the field in Europe, had attempted to separate conjoined twins with fused hearts. Before the operation the surgeons gave the parents a 10

per cent chance of one of the twins surviving.

The major problem facing them was that only one heart was functioning properly. Mr de Leval said: "We realised that the good heart was supporting the bad heart. When we disconnected the two, the bad heart could not support the circulation of the twin who died."

He said that after the surgeons thought they had separated the hearts, they realised there was a second, hidden connection between them. It took 10 minutes to find the join.

The surgeons said the next few days would be critical. But Professor Spitz said: "The child has got a normal heart, which is a big advantage. We would be very disappointed if he did not survive."

Queen Mother's hip replacement was 'a success'

GLENDA COOPER

The Queen Mother underwent a hip replacement operation yesterday but is making "a good recovery", Buckingham Palace said last night.

The one-and-a-half-hour operation on her right hip, at King Edward VII's Hospital for Officers in London, was "completed successfully". The operation on the Queen Mother, 95, was planned, on the advice of her doctors, and was not emergency surgery. She is expected to remain in hospital for about two weeks.

The Arthritis and Rheumatism Council said the Queen Mother was one of the oldest people in the world to undergo hip replacement but the prospects for a new pain free life after her operation were "extremely good". A spokesman said: "The man-made replacement, of plastic and metal, removes all pain and usually results in improved mobility. There is a 95 per cent success rate for such operations."

The Queen Mother's pain and discomfort has been noticeable recently and she has relied on a walking stick or wheelchair for some time. Most recently she has been driven around on public engagements in a golf buggy.

At her last public appearance - the Field of Remembrance Service at Westminster Abbey a week ago - the Queen Mother walked with difficulty using two



In pain: The Queen Mother has had difficulty walking

sticks, and she was not present at the Cenotaph on Sunday for the Remembrance Day Service.

Although hip replacement is a standard procedure carried out routinely on 50,000 patients each year, the effect of surgery on a 95-year-old is bound to cause concern.

In almost every case the patient is elderly and usually suffering from painful arthritis. Most patients stay two or three weeks in hospital, but it can take three months before they can walk unaided and six months to a year before they make a full recovery.

The Queen Mother's operation is likely to fuel the debate over claims of rationing within the health service. While privately funded operations, like hers, are successfully carried out on the very old, they are seldom performed on NHS patients over the age of 75.

11-year-olds choose TV over homework

From page 1
authors, said: "There is no government guidance on the amount of homework children should do. It is left to individual schools and local authorities to decide. As a result, the amount varies from schools to school and may even vary be-

tween children in the same school."

She said that many primary-school pupils were not being prepared for what they would encounter in secondary schools. "There is still a concern that pupils are not overburdened. Teachers tend to encourage

pupils to carry on work they have been doing at school or to continue personal reading."

The findings of the study will boost plans by Labour for national homework targets. David Blunkett, Labour's education spokesman, recently angered teacher unions by saying

that even seven-year-olds should be doing at least half an hour a night and secondary pupils an hour and a half.

The report also supports Mr Blunkett's contention that pupils are watching television instead of doing homework. While secondary-school chil-

dren came closer to reaching Mr Blunkett's homework target with 19 per cent doing one and a half hours a night and 13 per cent doing more, they watched even more television.

A third admitted to four hours or more a day and two-thirds to between one and three hours.

GRRREAT EXPECTATIONS

GRRRAHAM'S



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W & J
GRAHAM'S
PORT

NHS trust chief given £500,000 redundancy

NICHOLAS TIMMINS
Public Policy Editor

An NHS Trust has spent £524,000 making its chief executive redundant. The cash is sufficient to provide 150 hip replacements, mend 600 hernias or treat seven times over Jaymee Bowen, the child with leukaemia who was refused treatment by Cambridgeshire Health Authority.

The pay-off dwarfs the £200,000 payment made by Greenwich Healthcare NHS Trust when it parted with its chief executive and the £250,000 compensation payment made last year by the Burnley Trust to Maggie Aikman after the relationship between her and the consultants at the NHS hospital broke down.

The figure was revealed yesterday by the Healthcare Financial Management Association, the association of NHS finance officers, as part of its an-

nual statistics on chief executives' pay.

These show that 20 trust directors - half of them chief executives - earned more than £100,000 last year, compared with 6 in 1993-94.

Cheviot and Wansbeck NHS Trust, which runs Wansbeck Hospital in Ashington, Northumberland, said John O'Brien, its chief executive until March this year, had taken early retirement "in the interests of the service". He had been appointed as chief executive of the trust only in April 1994.

Jonathan Tymms, acting finance director for the trust, whose total income last year was £46m, said the half-million pound bill was made up of a £41,000 compensation payment for loss of office, an element for salary, and £414,000 in pension contributions which must be capitalised under new NHS rules.

He added that Mr O'Brien,

who was in his early 60s, had spent 29 years in the NHS and was paid £68,000 at the time of his departure. The cash was paid in accordance with NHS regulations and approved by NHS auditors, he said.

Alan Milburn, a Labour health spokesman, said paying out 1 per cent of the trust's annual income on a single severance package was "astounding and unacceptable".

The pay-out comes amid continued criticism of a "bureaucratic" mentality in the health service which has led to a growing NHS redundancy bill in recent years.

Andrew Will, former chief executive of Bath Health Authority who was himself made redundant at the age of 56 in 1992, said yesterday that the present NHS arrangements were "chaotic" with "chief executives and others still losing their jobs at the whim of chairs of health authorities and trusts".

THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD

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Ecstasy tragedy: Father of dead girl makes plea for action on dealers as another teenager fights for his life

Boys in hospital after drugs cocktail

A 15-year-old boy was last night fighting for his life and another was recovering in hospital after they took a drugs cocktail including ecstasy.

Eddie Ingleby and Kenneth Williams were taken ill just hours before tragic Leah Betts lost her fight for life.

The schoolboys were taken to the Queen Alexandra Hospital in Cosham, Hants, after hallucinating at their homes on Wednesday night.

Kenneth was fighting for his life in the hospital's intensive care unit while Eddie was said to be "recovering". Both boys are from the Leigh Park area of Havant, Hants.

Kenneth's mother, Sandra Page, described how her son returned staggering and stumbling to their home in Winterslow Drive. She said he could not speak when he arrived home and added: "I'd like to string up whoever is responsible for this."

Kenneth's step-brother, Carl Page, said Kenneth kept falling over and bumping into things.

He said: "He went into the kitchen and tried buttering a plate. We thought he was just drunk. We put him to bed but he kept getting out and wanted to sleep on the floor. He got really aggressive when we went towards him."

The family called an ambulance at about 11pm and he was taken to hospital.

Eddie was taken to the hospital about an hour later, after his mother found him staggering uncontrollably around their home at Fleet End Close, Leigh Park.

Detectives in Portsmouth, Hants, warned yesterday that the drugs problem was so bad in the city that there could be "ten Leah Betts tragedies every week".

Drug squad Detective Sergeant Nigel Midgley said Portsmouth's club scene attracted "thousands" of people from around the region each weekend and drugs were widely available.

"We have spoken to both the boys, but not surprisingly they do not want to tell us what they took. We believe that they took a cocktail of drugs, it's frighteningly easy to get hold of ecstasy, amphetamines and cannabis."

"We're now making inquiries to find out where they got the drugs from."

Portsmouth police estimate that the ecstasy trade in the city is worth a staggering £13m a year.



Facing tragedy: Leah Betts' father, Paul, and his wife, Janet, show their emotion yesterday after deciding to cut off the 18-year-old's life-support Photograph: Edward Webb

'My Leah's ordeal is now over'

LOUISE JURY

The life-support system keeping alive the 18-year-old ecstasy victim, Leah Betts, was switched off yesterday after tests showed she was brain dead.

Her distraught father, Paul, broke the news at a press conference at which he renewed appeals for action against drug dealers and said he took comfort from Leah's organs being used for transplant.

Leah, of Latchingdon near Maldon, Essex, had been in a coma at Broomfield Hospital, Chelmsford, since collapsing just after midnight on Sunday after taking one ecstasy tablet at her 18th birthday party.

After four days in which the teenager showed no signs of improvement, the decision to switch off the life-support was made on Wednesday evening and carried out early yesterday. Just a few hours later, Mr Betts

and his wife, Janet, faced the press and wept as he said: "Leah's ordeal is now over."

In an emotional outpouring, Mr Betts, a former officer in the Metropolitan police, called for a radical review of the sentencing of drug dealers and spoke of his hatred for those he accused of killing his daughter.

"The hatred I have got is welling up inside me not only as a father but as an ex-policeman. I think there has to be a complete radical change in the way people are dealt with," he said.

Drug dealers should serve the sentence passed "instead of being sentenced to five years and then you let them out after five months".

"That is the biggest load of bull I have come across. What deterrent is that? It killed my daughter and it is killing others."

Mr Betts said he would treasure memories of his daughter "from bouncing her on my knee to when she came running down



Victim: Leah Betts died five days after taking ecstasy

the hall on Saturday night dressed in her new outfit, saying 'how do I look?'. She looked so beautiful."

His wife, Leah's stepmother, who is a nurse, repeated a

warning to those who take drugs: "I could lecture like a mum until I am blue in the face, but the only people who can prevent this from happening again is yourself."

She said she was horrified by people "sitting around discussing the virtues of these drugs" and by the notion of testing tablets to check the purity. She stressed that the ecstasy which claimed Leah's life was the straight, unadulterated chemical compound.

Mrs Betts added: "To people who say it's her own fault, you are right, but drugs should not be available in the first place and peer pressure should be to refuse them and not take them. This fashion must die like our daughter has died."

Mr and Mrs Betts, together with Leah's three sisters and a brother, had kept a vigil at her bedside. They thanked the intensive care unit staff, the transplant team and the public who have inundated the family with letters and cards of support.

Some of the letters came from children who had stopped taking drugs after seeing what had happened.

Mr Betts said: "If there are any others I can help - by talking to groups, families, anything whatever having lived this living hell I would be only too willing to assist in any way I can."

Vanessa Morgan, transplant co-ordinator for Essex and North London, met Leah's parents on Wednesday after they told intensive care staff they wished their daughter's organs to be donated. She said: "A young death like this is such a tragedy that getting something positive out of it must be good."

Leah is thought to have bought the tablet at Raquel's nightclub in Basildon last Friday. Police yesterday repeated appeals for anyone with information on the dealer to come forward.

A number of people have been questioned and released on police bail. Two were charged with intent to supply drugs in incidents unrelated to her case.

Rave culture link brings greater risk in Britain

LOUISE JURY

Britain is seeing a higher number of deaths from ecstasy than other countries because of the way in which the drug has taken hold in the dance scene where the possibility of overheating and dehydration increases the risks.

Dr John Henry, of the National Poisons Unit at Guy's

Hospital, London, said: "We're ahead of other countries because it is now part of the national culture. Many people do it. But, as far as I know, the numbers of deaths are small elsewhere."

There have been very few in the United States. The incidence is lower because the drug is generally taken in more leisurely circumstances than the

hot and frenzied surroundings of a night-club.

However, Dr Henry is now receiving reports from Germany, Sweden and Italy. "I have heard from colleagues in Germany two or three times recently with cases of liver damage and people needing liver transplants."

The reports are coming from cities well-known for their night

life, like Hamburg and Berlin.

He believes that more may emerge when the risks become more widely known and ecstasy is identified as a possible factor in young people's deaths.

In Britain, Dr Henry believes as many as 50 young people a year are dying as a consequence of taking the drug. There are certainly more than the commonly quoted figure of

a total of 50. More accurate figures will eventually become available through the national mortality data but those statistics are currently running with a three-year time lag.

He does not understand why "this fad, this craze" of taking ecstasy has taken hold but he fears for its implications. "We are [effectively] conducting a massive experiment," he says.

The long-term effects are unknown.

His biggest worry is the possibility of higher suicide and depression rates among the young people who regard "dropping an E" as barely breaking the law.

Dr Henry says those who have used ecstasy have lower levels of a hormone called serotonin in their spinal fluid. So do depressives.

West jurors told to ignore pressure

WILL BENNETT

The jurors in the Rosemary West trial were told yesterday that they must keep "cool heads" when considering their verdicts.

The judge, Mr Justice Mantell, warned them in his summing up at Winchester Crown Court that they must ignore the external pressures which the sensational character of the case had created.

"Nobody can pretend otherwise than that you have a heavy responsibility. Your task is not made any easier by the sensational nature of the case and by the very heavy media interest surrounding it," he said.

"I must repeat the warning to set aside all perceived ideas about the case, all prejudice and all sentiment. Cool heads are needed."

The judge told them that they must ignore what they had read in newspapers, seen on television or heard on the radio about the case.

Mrs West, 41, denies murdering 10 girls and young women whose remains were found at 25 Cromwell Street, Gloucester, where she lived with her husband Frederick, and at their previous home in the city. Mr West, who was charged with 12 murders, was found hanged in his prison cell last New Year's Day.

The judge told the jury: "The prosecution must prove guilt. A defendant never had to prove his or her innocence... 'Guilt is not proved unless the prosecution makes you sure of it. In other words the prosecution has to satisfy you beyond reasonable doubt that that applies to each and every charge."

"Murder is the deliberate unlawful killing of another human being with the intention at that time to cause death or really serious bodily harm. It is not just the person who strikes the fatal blow who is guilty. Where two people act together as part of a joint plan to commit the offences each is guilty."

"Suppose you were sure that Rosemary West had enticed a young woman to Cromwell Street... then even though it might be that Fred West was ultimately responsible for despatching the victim Rosemary West would be equally guilty."

The judge told the jury not to "speculate about what evidence there might have been. You have heard all the evidence."

The judge will continue his summing up today and the jury is expected to be sent out to consider its verdicts on Monday.

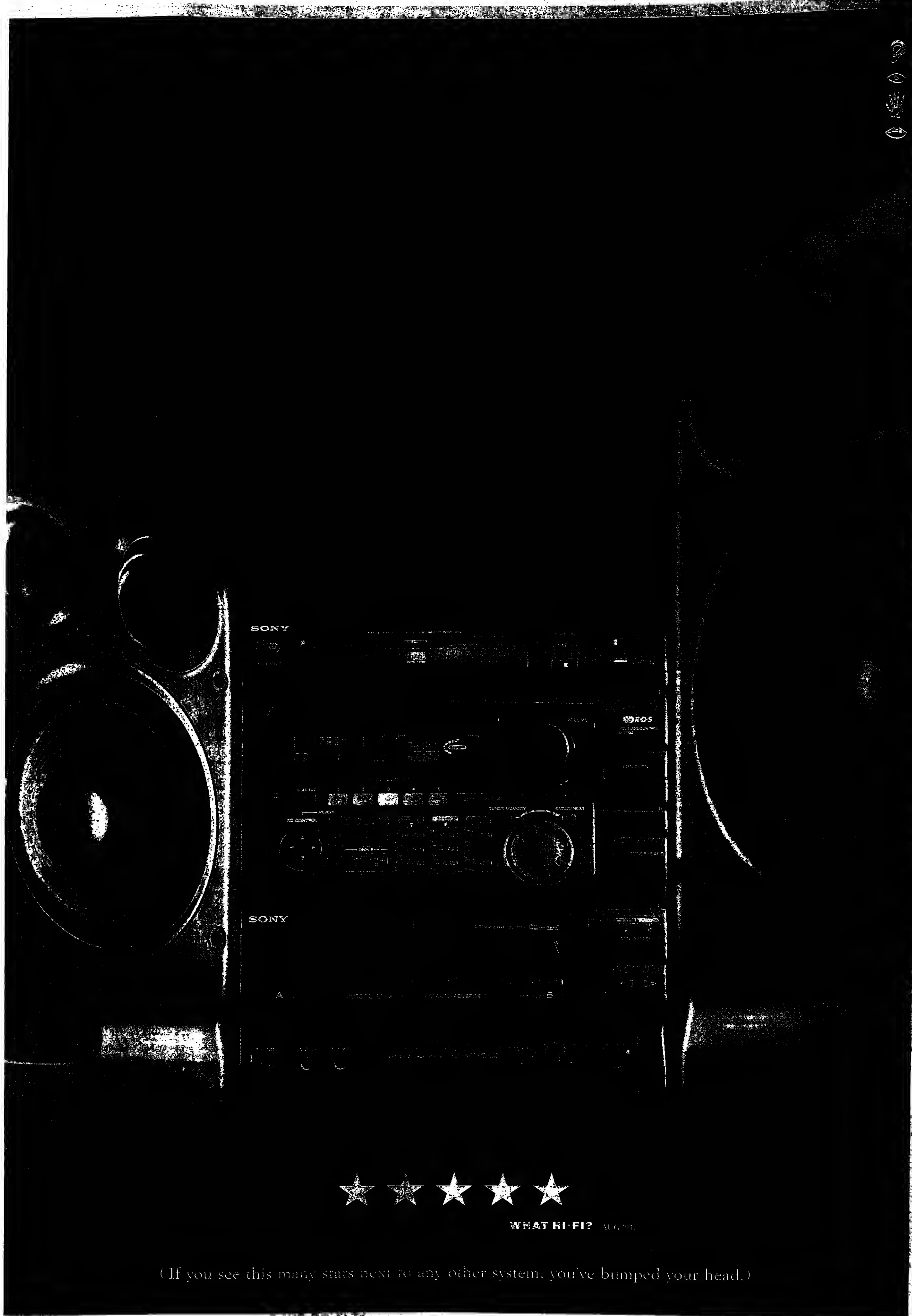
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End of the line for 'Today': The newspaper that broke the mould is the victim of falling sales and a harsh economic climate

Colourful days and the death of Eddy's dream

STEVE BOGGAN

As the world's first seven-day electronic newspaper was being put to bed on 3 March 1986, its editor, Brian MacArthur, gathered his exhausted staff together and thanked them.

"Tonight, we've reached the green fields despite the scowling cynics and fair weather friends. It's a magnificent achievement by all of you," he said. It was indeed an achievement that *Today* came out at all that night. Computer failures dogged production; the new technology that was to have made the newspaper more up-to-the-minute than any other in history was not working; and, of course, the colour printing disaster that was to have become the hallmark of *Today* was only then being conceived.

Recalling the launch later, Mr MacArthur wrote: "As they left the party celebrating the launch,

most staff knew in their hearts that the paper was disappointing... The greatest betrayal was the quality of the colour, the great promise of *Today*. We had a genuinely historic picture of the Queen. It had been transmitted in seconds down a telephone line... scanner machine, the first time that computer technology had been used to transmit new pictures from Australia, where the Queen was on tour, to Britain. As it appeared on the front page, however, the colour was smudged."

It was to have been a technological dream, but it turned into a nightmare for Mr MacArthur and Eddy Shah, the Warrington newspaper proprietor who broke the union stronghold over print production and launched the first new national newspaper in decades.

Production free from the interference of unions and press

harons and direct inputting by journalists was to have been the future. On the back of the dream came other newspapers. Some, like the *Independent*, survived. Others, like the *London Daily News* and the *Sunday Correspondent*, failed.

"There was a tremendous sense of optimism before the launch," Michael Williams, a former *Today* features editor, recalled. "It was to have been a truly independent, classless newspaper using the latest in technology to produce a clean, colour newspaper with a US-style of presentation. But we weren't ready. Shah set a premature deadline... the staff couldn't cope with the technology. It was chaos and pandemonium came: launch time."

On day one, Mr MacArthur said the paper sold more than 1 million copies and could have sold 3 million. But, with daily sales down to 550,000 within months, 400,000 lower than projected, *Today* ran into severe financial trouble and was sold in a £24m deal to Tiny Rowland's Lohno in June 1986.

In June 1987, with circulation at just 300,000, Rupert Murdoch bought the paper in a £40m deal and installed as editor David Montgomery, editor of the *News of the World*. He transformed the paper into a brash, sharp read for the aspiring executive. He was the first to identify the yuppie as a sexy tabloid subject, filling the paper with pound signs, power dressing, mobile phones and property prices. Paradoxically, he was also the first to notice the new wave of green consumerism. He married the two, doubled circulation within a year and earned a Newspaper of the Year title.

For a time, *Today* was seen as a threat to both the *Daily Mail* and the *Mirror*, but that threat subsided with yuppiedom and the fortunes of the Greens. With sales falling below half a million again, 45 journalists were made



First edition: Eddy Shah, *Today's* founder, with a copy on launch day Photograph: Reuters

redundant in January 1991. Mr Montgomery stood down several months later, making way for Martin Dunn, deputy editor of the *Sun* to tidy up a product left shoddy after its move to Wapping. Mr Dunn's peers believe he performed well, redesigning the paper and stemming the circulation drift, before moving handing over to

Richard Stott, who remained editor until yesterday.

Under the stewardship of Mr Stott — a former *Mirror* and *People* editor — the paper leaned harder to the left and *Today* began to nip at the heels of government and the Establishment.

But circulation wasn't holding steady. It was down to 560,000 from 615,000 last year,

and it was the paper's downfall. Despite its fresh lease of life as a campaigning paper, despite comparatively low overheads — offices in Wapping and shared News International presses — the newspaper group was no longer prepared to absorb the losses.

Last night, as its journalists pondered their future, *Today* was put to bed for the last time.

End of price war gives industry hope

Analysis

A radical restructuring of Britain's newspaper market, launched yesterday with the closure of *Today*, will give the declining industry its first breathing space for three years.

While cost-cutting is likely to continue, the demise of one newspaper and the apparent end of the debilitating cover price war will together improve prospects throughout Fleet Street.

Sharp increases in newsprint prices — 40 per cent last year, with up to 15 per cent more expected in January — have badly squeezed profit margins across the industry. The price war, launched in mid-1993 by Rupert Murdoch's News International, exacerbated the pressures for all main United Kingdom titles, and forced most companies to pare back on expenses.

The closure of *Today* was an admission that the title would never make any money, according to News International insiders. Having bled up £140m in losses, Mr Murdoch decided, finally, to walk away.

An offer this summer from Mohammed al-Fayed, owner of Harrods, to take *Today* off Mr Murdoch's hands was rejected in favour of closing the newspaper outright, in the hope that some of its 500,000 readers would move to other NI titles, such as the *Times*.

Insiders at NI said the closure would also allow additional copies of the *Sun* to be printed, and that the company was planning to concentrate on building up its other titles, including the *Times*, the *Sunday Times* and the *News of the World*.

At the same time, the price war was all but abandoned last night. Next Monday, the *Times* will be on sale for 30p, up 5p. Two months ago, the cover price was raised from 20p to 25p, allowing both the *Telegraph* and the *Independent* to follow suit, to 35p from 30p.

The *Telegraph*, which yesterday unveiled sharply lower profits for the year to date, said it was likely to raise its cover price as well, probably to 40p.

News International is also lowering the profit margin it provides to retailers, from 11.9 per cent to just 10 per cent. Taken together, the moves look aimed at improving the profitability of the *Times*.

"This means that even Murdoch isn't impervious to newsprint increases," Daniel Coulson, chief executive of the Telegraph group, said. "And it means the price war didn't work."

The *Times* has seen its circulation nearly double to 680,000 from about 350,000 as a result of its aggressive pricing strategy. But following an initial slump, the *Telegraph* managed to keep its sales above the psychologically important 1 million mark.

Moreover, the rise in circulation hurt profits at News International at the very time that Mr Murdoch's cash needs elsewhere in the world, particularly in Asia, were growing. Profits from his master company were hurt by development costs at Star-TV, the Asian satellite broadcasting company.

The UK newspaper industry anticipates much more action in coming months. In particular, speculation over the future of the ailing Express titles intensified yesterday. Media analysts expect Lord Stevens, chairman of United News and Media, either to sell the newspapers or to invest fresh funds to improve their chances of competing against the rival Mail titles. The end of the price war will make it easier for him to find funds for the needed investment.

While shares of all the publicly quoted newspaper companies rose yesterday, analysts warned that the long-term problems remained.

"This is a declining industry," one media analyst said. "It will become increasingly hard to make any money out of [newspapers]."

Mathew Horsman



Murdoch: Would not absorb losses

Photograph: David Rose

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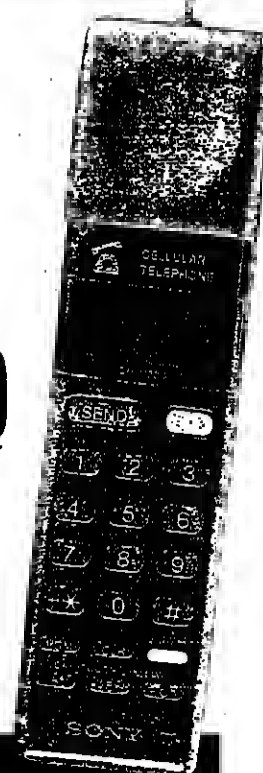
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Free and easy: While some national monuments now charge for entry, there is still a bustling alternative culture for the day-tripper



Star turn: Visitors watch a free performance by a street entertainer in Covent Garden, central London, yesterday

Photograph: John Voos

Something for nothing? All you need is a spot of lateral thinking

DAVID LISTER
Arts Correspondent

Like most of London's museums, the Science Museum in South Kensington charges for admission. But for those eager to broaden the frontiers of their knowledge, they can boldly go where few men have gone before — to Willesden Green — and have an alternative science lecture for free.

Every week expert "alternative thinkers" give free talks. Last night's advocated the theory that diseases arrive on our planet on comets that have travelled from outer space.

While increasing parts of the capital's high culture move to charging customers, with the new head of the Victoria and Albert an advocate of admission charges, there remains a bustling alternative culture for the visitor or family on a day out. And it's free. So too are the national monuments to high culture: the British Museum, the National and Tate galleries. Up to 50 lesser museums and galleries in London are still free. But with the Science, Natu-

ral History, National Maritime and Imperial War museums all having compulsory charges, and the V&A asking euphemistically for voluntary donations, it can pay to think laterally. And some of London's free attractions certainly demand a certain amount of lateral thinking.

They still change the guard at Buckingham Palace. And you still do not need a penny to see it, though you need a pocket calculator to plan your visit. It is advertised as being "on alternate days, on even dates in November and December, not in very wet weather or on certain ceremonial days".

Free day in London

10am: British Museum
11.30am: Watch the Changing of the Guard, St James's Park
2pm: National Gallery
4pm: Visit the 10 Bears Christmas Grotto at Grosvenor Gardens (the tickets cost £1)
8pm: Join in with Carols in Trafalgar Square

Free too is the Albert Memorial Visitor Centre. The memorial itself, a masterpiece of Gothic revival with nearly 200 statues, is shrouded by scaffolding and hidden from view, but an exhibition in the adjacent visitors' centre shows what it would look like if it were visible.

The London Tourist Board points out that the capital's parks are free, many with free concerts, and so is the capital's pageantry, events like the State Opening of Parliament, the Lord Mayor's Show, Trafalgar Day Parade and Trooping the Colour, though it adds laterally "although sometimes you have to pay for the best view".

It is proud of what it calls free eccentrics' entertainment, such as Speakers' Corner and the Peter Pan Cup Swimming Race. There is non-eccentric entertainment in places like the South Bank Centre foyer, Westminster Abbey and Covent Garden piazza. The Oxford and Cambridge boat race can be viewed for free, so can the London marathon and the Notting Hill Carnival.

V&A director attacks 'silly' donations

DAVID LISTER

The director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, Dr Alan Borg, yesterday described the museum's system of asking visitors for voluntary donations as "silly", claiming it just made people feel uncomfortable and did not raise revenue efficiently.

As revealed in the *Independent* yesterday, Dr Borg wants to end this system, and is an advocate of compulsory charges. At a meeting with journalists he spelt out the enormous sums the museum now needs, claiming that most of its 144 galleries were sub-standard.

Dr Borg took over as director of the V&A from Dame Elizabeth Esteve-Coll last month. He has already made changes to the management system she introduced. "I have removed one layer of management," he said. "One effect of that has been to bring the curators closer to the centre."

He added that millions needed to be spent on bringing the museum up to a proper standard. "We have got galleries which to my mind are a disgrace to a national museum," he said. "The British art and design galleries are poor. We haven't



Dr Alan Borg: made changes

got an education centre, which is amazing for a place that was set up with a remit of education. Some galleries are appallingly displayed, one has been closed for living memory. The Islamic gallery is appalling. The Henry Cole wing galleries are a disgrace. The majority of galleries need upgrading, from very serious upgrading to making sure everything has a label. The ceramics galleries are very poorly displayed with labels that go back to before the war."

On the question of charging, Dr Borg, who introduced admission charges at the Imperial War Museum, said he did not have a specific figure in mind, but added: "It is not a question of affordability." Referring to gallery closures, he said: "I would rather have an entrance charge which could keep the galleries open." He added that the museum, which receives a £30m grant from government, was moving towards a deficit.

In an article to be published in *Antique Collector*, Dr Borg says that the majority of people who visit the V&A "could afford to pay a £10 entrance fee if they had to". At present visitors are asked to give a £4.50 donation.

It will be up to the trustees, headed by Lord Armstrong of Ilminster, the former Cabinet Secretary, to decide whether to bring in compulsory admission charges. Dr Borg said the voluntary system was silly and made people feel uncomfortable and he would prefer to remove the voluntary charges.

Meanwhile, the V&A is planning to renew its premises by launching an architectural competition for a £40m building on part of its site. It will apply for up to £20m of millennium funding for the project.

BBC gets \$1m for Diana interview

CLARE GARNER

The BBC has been besieged by bids for the rights to broadcast the Panorama interview with the Princess of Wales and yesterday raked a reported \$1m from a single deal with ABC, one of America's major networks. Billed as an ABC News Special, the interview will be broadcast on Friday 24 November at 9pm.

ABC, which struck a news-gathering partnership with the BBC in July 1993, outbid its three main rivals for what is being dubbed the scoop of the century. The BBC insisted that ABC paid a "fair market rate" but refused to be specific about the price paid.

As Britons sit down to watch the interview on Monday evening, the programme will simultaneously be broadcast by BBC World and BBC Prime which together reach 46 million homes worldwide.

At a press conference yesterday, Panorama reporter Martin Bashir said the Princess

of Wales was given no preferential treatment and insisted that there had been "no paid intermediary... no Mr Big or Mr Fix It" to secure the interview. "I was able to outline the general areas of discussion but no specific questions were given to anyone beforehand," he said.

Mr Bashir insisted that the interview had emerged from more general research into the monarchy and said the BBC had approached the Princess rather than the other way round.

"The invitation came from us. It was not suggested to us by anyone else," he said. "You know and I know that you use first hand sources if you can," he added.

Mr Bashir, who in the past has presented *Songs of Praise*, said that because he had never done a royal story before, he had been unaware of the enormity of the scoop.

Mr Bashir was unable to predict what effect the interview would have on the monarchy, saying he was "a professional doing his job".

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Portillo backs crime-fighting role for forces

CHRISTOPHER BELLAMY
Defence Correspondent

Defence resources may be diverted to help fight drug trafficking and international organised crime as they become more of a threat to national security, the Secretary of State for Defence, Michael Portillo, said yesterday.

But he added that such a move would not prejudice the traditional roles of the armed forces and that they needed to retain the ability to fight full-scale wars as well as taking on new roles.

Because future conflict could arise anywhere and for many reasons, intelligence would be the key to defence in future, he told service chiefs and top civil servants. Although weapons technology will continue to be transferred to Third World countries, Mr Portillo said it was vital that Western countries retained their superiority in intelligence, using modern information systems.

Mr Portillo was giving his own views on British security in the year 2010 to an expert audience. He softened the view on Euro-

pean defence co-operation which he had expressed at the Conservative Party conference, but stressed that individual nations, and Nato, remained the "most credible" defensive organisations. Sources at the MoD stressed the speech was his own work and not been written for him.

Mr Portillo said the growth of crime and "inner-city alienation" might diminish the self-confidence of democracies and make them more introspective. "At the same time," he said, "drug trafficking and international organised crime will be seen as a greater threat to national security even than they are today. Defence resources may be diverted to combating them."

MoD sources said that the defence resources to be diverted would be mainly intelligence and communications, although Navy and Air Force units could be involved in the interception of smugglers - a role for which they have always been available.

The move would be consistent with recent proposals to involve the security service (MIS) more in tackling organised

crime. The need to use defence forces might arise as international drug cartels became better organised and more heavily armed, MoD sources said.

Mr Portillo stressed the need to develop automated battlefield command and control systems, which would be "the key to success, and the key to minimising casualties". The need to minimise friendly casualties was particularly acute as people would become less tolerant of mistakes, he said. He added that Britain would therefore need to continue to work closely with the US.

Mr Portillo said the age of deterrence had not ended but that deterring people had become much more complicated in a more "diverse" world. "The nation state remains the most credible unit of deterrence," he said, citing the examples of Britain in the Falklands war and of Israel. He added that "deterrence" might also be used to counter state-sponsored terrorism - in other words, a terrorist attack on London might be answered by a massive strike on a foreign target known to be responsible.



Security risk: MPs are pressing for a 'safe' area for media interviews after the College Green attack on Brian Mawhinney. Photograph: Tom Pilston

Students declare war over Asylum Bill

PATRICIA WYNN DAVIES
Political Correspondent

Supporters of Wednesday's point and flourish attack on Tory party chairman, Brian Mawhinney, yesterday convened a follow-up press conference in their London college, declaring "war" on the Government over the proposed Asylum and Immigration Bill.

The act of defiance came as pressure increased from Tory MPs for a dedicated "safe area" close to the Palace of Westminster in which broadcast interviews could be conducted with ministers and MPs.

The police were forced to apologise for taking 20 minutes to respond to frantic 999 calls from Alan Duncan MP, the chairman's parliamentary aide, after Dr Mawhinney was accosted on College Green on his

way to interviews after the State Opening of Parliament.

The Commons Sergeant at Arms is expected to hold an inquiry into the possibilities of a dedicated press area.

Betty Boothroyd, the Speaker, was said yesterday to have been concerned about possible risks to safety since the leadership contest in the summer, when the green was in constant use for media interviews.

Authorities at Kingsway College, Holborn, moved quickly to distance themselves from the holding of the news conference on its premises, saying it was convened in the canteen by Nick de Marco, student union president at Kingsway and an organiser of the Movement for Justice, which was behind the paint-throwing.

Two A-level students at the college, Karen Doyle and Naveed Malik, both 18, were

arrested for assault on Wednesday, along with Amanda Egbe, 20, a sabbatical officer on the student union of the University of North London. Charges had not been brought last night.

Mr de Marco said the protest "was a declaration of war against the Government. If it tries to introduce the most racist Bill ever and send people back to their deaths, we will stop it in any way necessary."

US veto could stall Nigeria oil embargo

The Labour Party yesterday pressed the Government for an embargo on Nigerian oil exports - both as a lever to end the bloody denial of human rights in Nigeria and as a means of stemming the tide of asylum-seekers coming to Britain. But although an embargo was not ruled out by Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind, privately ministers feel there is little prospect of getting such a move through the UN security council.

Were the Government to take up the call by Robin Cook,

ed there will be 40,000 applications for asylum in Britain of which only a small number will be accepted.

With MPs on both sides continuing to press for the Bill to go to a special standing committee so that evidence could be taken from experts outside Parliament, Mr Cook said foreign policy had a part to play in removing the pressure of refugees. Human rights should be at the centre of foreign policy, starting with Nigeria.

"Given all we now know about the brutality of that regime, it is very difficult to understand why it is that over the past 12 months out of the 2,032 applications for asylum from people from Nigeria, one has been granted and 2,031 have been rejected?"

"Can the foreign secretary put his hand on his conscience and tell us that 99.95 per cent of those applications were bogus?" Mr Cook asked.

He also stressed the long-term role development could play in curbing economic migrants and said it would be "grotesque" if the Budget brought cuts in overseas aid.

the shadow Foreign Secretary, in the resumed Queen's Speech debate, a senior ministerial source said it was likely the US would veto it. The US imports about 50 per cent of Nigeria's oil, but Britain imports little.

Mr Cook said an embargo would be the best way to bring home the revulsion felt at last week's hanging of nine environmental activists by the Nigerian regime. "I am familiar with the dilemma that applying economic pressures to a regime can bring pain to its people, but the whole point of Ken Saro-Wiwa's campaign was that the peoples of Nigeria saw too little of the revenues from the oil," Mr Cook said.

Mr Rifkind said no option was excluded. "What we are primarily concerned to do is identify measures that won't harm the Nigerian people but make international condemnation of the Nigerian Government clear and unmistakable. It was 'right and proper' that the Commonwealth had suspended Nigeria and that Britain had imposed an arms embargo."

Mr Cook saw the restoration of democracy and human rights in Nigeria as one way of helping to reduce the number of applications for asylum in Britain - an issue the Government has chosen to deal with through its controversial Asylum and Immigration Bill.

Worldwide there are 40 million refugees and displaced persons. This year it is expected

Opening the day's debate, Mr Rifkind ignored the warning by his predecessor Douglas Hurd against "empty noise and phoney warfare" and concentrated on ridiculing Labour over its CND past and U-turns on Europe. He said that while recognising the benefits that the EU continues to bring to Britain, the Government wanted to make it work better. "The Prime Minister has made it clear that we will support moves at next year's Inter-governmental Conference towards a union which was fairer, more flexible and more relevant to ordinary people through more effective co-operation in areas like foreign and security policy and the fight against crime."

Intervening, Denis MacShane, Labour MP for Rotherham, protested that after Mr Portillo's "wile, xenophobic, ranting speech" at the Tory conference, no British government containing him could be taken seriously on any European question.

Waived by a smiling Mr Portillo, Mr Rifkind told Mr MacShane: "I am sure you feel better having got that off your chest. But it bears very little relevance to the issues before us."

Next week's business

MONDAY - Commons: Questions to National Heritage ministers and the Lord Chancellor's Department; Queen's Speech debate, fourth day - investment, trade, industry and transport. Lords: Queen's Speech debate, second day - law and home and social affairs.

TUESDAY - Commons: Environment questions; Prime Minister's Questions; Queen's Speech debate - social affairs, education and home affairs. Lords: Queen's Speech debate - environment, agriculture, local government and education.

WEDNESDAY - Commons: (9.30am) Backbench debates: Common Fisheries Policy; West Yorkshire's water supply; Education funding in Northumbria; Fleet maintenance and repair organisation in Portsmouth

naval base; Compensation for women permanently injured by radiotherapy treatment after breast cancer. (12.30pm) Scottish questions; Queen's Speech debate - the economy. Lords: Queen's Speech - industrial and economic affairs.

THURSDAY - Commons: Treasury questions; Prime Minister's Questions; Chemical Weapons Bill; Second Reading: Hong Kong (Overseas Public Servants) Bill; Second Reading: Lords: Debate on earnings top-up draft rules for a new in-work benefit for people without dependent children.

FRIDAY - Commons: Debate on earnings top-up draft rules. Lords: Not sitting.

TODAY'S BUSINESS - Commons: (9.30am) Queen's Speech debate, third day - health. Lords: Not sitting.

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0800 320 300

Fighting the activists: Bloodsports lobby launches £3.5m advertising campaign aimed at countering influence of animal rights movement



Country matters: Members of the Grafton Hunt in Oxfordshire out cubbing on one of the first hunts of the year

Photograph: Tom Pilston

New group to step up battle in the countryside

DANNY PENMAN

Britain's newest and probably most powerful bloodsports and countryside lobbying group was launched yesterday with a £3.5m advertising campaign.

After months of secret preparations, the Countryside Movement was founded to protect the interests of rural Britain as well as those of the hunting, shooting and fishing lobbies.

The movement claims that rural Britain is poorly understood by urban dwellers and seeks to build a greater "awareness and understanding" through expensive and sustained advertising campaign.

According to secret minutes of meetings held by the organisation obtained by the *Independent*, high on its list of priorities is countering the growing influence of animal welfare groups. It also aims to tackle land access groups such

as the Ramblers' Association. One of the full-page advertisements, which will appear in national newspapers from today, pictures a slaughterman. The caption reads "George Roberts head slaughterman and animal lover". Another advertisement tackles organisations lobbying for greater land access rights. Beneath a picture of a footpath reads the caption "It goes right across farmer Stockdale's land. No one's defending your right to use it more than him."

The Countryside Movement, which is supported by some of Britain's richest and most influential landowners, drew criticism from the Ramblers' Association and the International Fund for Animal Welfare.

Both groups accuse the new movement of being a front for the blood sports lobby and those who wish to restrict public access to the countryside. David Beskine, a Ramblers' Association spokesman, criticised the footpath and right to roam advertisement and demanded its withdrawal. "Survey after survey has shown that the greatest problem walkers face in the countryside is obstruction of footpaths," he said.

"There's a host of popular movements in this country concerned with animal rights, preserving the countryside and the right to roam and they [the Countryside Movement] think they can alter their growing influence with money. I don't think they'll succeed."

The IFAW described the adverts as "patronising, glossy and totally without substance".

Sir David Steel, the movement's executive chairman, said the aim of the advertising campaign was to build up a huge database of people with an interest in all aspects of the countryside who could be mobilised over key issues that affect them.

Car culture creates new level of dependence

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR
Transport Correspondent

People have become so addicted to their cars that they even use them for many journeys of under half a mile, according to research for the RAC.

The study, called *Car Dependence*, paints a picture of a society so transformed by widespread car ownership and use that most people can no longer think of life without wheels. The bald statistics of increasing car use show that, between 1950 and 1992, car ownership per household increased almost tenfold and as a result, people travelled, on average, three times as many miles per year.

As with all addictions, car dependence grows slowly. People buy a car when they can afford it and gradually their lifestyle changes so that they become unable to conceive of no longer having one. For example, they move to areas with little public transport, they obtain jobs too far away to travel by any other means or they have children who then need transporting.

Once people own a car, they make much less use of public transport and therefore the widespread increase in car ownership has sharply reduced the provision of public transport.

There has been, in particular, a sharp growth in the number of trips for shopping and for escorting children, both to school and to leisure activities, many of which involve short journeys. For example, nearly 7 per cent of journeys of under half a mile are now by car - nearly double the proportion in the 1970s. And 8.2 per cent of car journeys involve trips of less than one mile.

People in rural areas are the most dependent on car use, often being "forced" to use cars when their income cannot really support car ownership and therefore they sacrifice spending money on other basics such as food or housing.

International evidence suggests that car dependence is growing in nearly all developed countries. In only two countries is the proportion of journeys by car not increasing: in the US, where car use has virtually reached saturation point, for 98 per cent of all journeys, and the Netherlands, where the Government has long had a policy of introducing radical measures to encourage other modes of transport, such as rail and cycling.

Shall we walk?

Methods of transport used for journeys of under half a mile	1975	1988
Walking	93.3%	90.7%
Car	3.8%	6.9%
Bus	0.1%	0.2%
Rail	0%	0%
Cycling	2.6%	1.9%

The research, which used both existing data and new surveys, suggests that for around 20 per cent of journeys, cars are virtually the only means of making the trip. In about 60 per cent of cases, the journey could be made by other means but it would either take longer or be much less practical.

The RAC says the report shows that efforts to reduce traffic by imposing blanket measures on all motorists, such as petrol price increases or road tolls, are misguided.

Edmund King, the RAC's head of campaigns, said: "We should concentrate on trying to reduce the number of journeys in the 20 per cent of cases where there is actually a genuine alternative."

However, the report warns that allowing current trends to continue, transport conditions are bound to deteriorate since there will be more traffic on the roads and fewer alternative forms of travel.

Car Dependence is produced by the ESRC Transport Studies Unit, Oxford University, price £25.

Leading article, page 20

DAILY POEM

Quartz, Quince, Sex

By Frederick Jones

Everywhere the walls are invisible
as habit, remote. For the child the room
is huge plains, each with its own geography
of dust, sun and planets; only the window

shows they're walls at all. But glance through this
window's single eye, and what's outside
turns out the same as what's within, a pair
of facing mirrors' endless reflections.

Newton timed the echo in Trinity Quad,
and conned the pentagram and hexagon
for some pattern outside the wordlist. Seven
bands of colour cross the darkened room

- and viridian, mauve, magenta, cyan,
what of these? Fresh from the rowing eight and
dressed to the nines a minister declares
a decade of call it what you will.

Frederick Jones lectures in Latin and Ancient History at Liverpool University. He was the 1992 winner of the Felicia Hemans Prize for Lyrical Poetry and was shortlisted winner in the 1991 Northern Poetry Competition. *Congreve's Balsamic Elixir*, his first collection from which this poem is taken, (Penguin, £6.95), is an intriguing compote of sweet and sour miniatures of time and place.



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10
internationalBonn opposition
picks leader fit
to tackle KohlIMRE KARACS
Mannheim

Amid scenes of jubilation celebrating a great election victory, Germany's main opposition party, the Social Democrats, yesterday dumped the unpopular Rudolf Scharping, and acclaimed the colourful Oskar Lafontaine as their new leader.

The stunning coup, hatched overnight by Mr Lafontaine after a rousing speech at the SPD's conference in Mannheim, sent shivers down the spines of conservative politicians in Bonn. Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats, 14 points ahead in the latest polls, now face an emboldened opposition no longer dragged down by a leader devoid of ideas and charisma.

Until yesterday morning, Mr Scharping stood unchallenged for the post of chairman. Then, as fate would have it, he it was who had to convey the news of his imminent demise: "I asked Oskar if he was going to be a candidate," Mr Scharping told the hushed audience. "Oskar answered my question by saying he would run."

The announcement brought the roof down, rewarding Mr Scharping with the first real table-thumping ovation at a conference already into its third day. The party really took off an hour later, when the result of the ballot was read out. Mr Scharping, his pallid features turning ever paler, seemed to be choking back tears as his popularity within the party he has

led for two years was enumerated. Mr Lafontaine, who led the party's unsuccessful electoral challenge to Mr Kohl in 1990, had received 321 votes; Mr Scharping, defeated by Mr Kohl last year, a derisory 190.

"I was of the view that we needed clarity," Mr Scharping murmured. "Now we have it." The new leader faces the task of uniting Social Democrats behind policies that can challenge the conservative hegemony. After a series of regional-election setbacks, the party has plunged to its lowest poll rating since the war. Although Mr Lafontaine has only won a two-year term, his role in preparing the Social Democrats for the 1998 general elections will be crucial. "I am aware of my responsibilities and depend on all of you to support me," he said in his victory speech.

If charisma were all they needed, the Social Democrats would be home and dry. Mr Lafontaine, the 52-year-old prime minister of Saarland, has bags of wit and charm, and a populist touch that few can match. He also has quite a reputation as a bon vivant.

In 1992, Saarland's parliament discovered that he was paying himself a state pension, at the age of 48, on top of his salary as prime minister. Mr Lafontaine was forced to spin a convoluted fable about cash flows and his high cost of living in order to escape censure.

His tastes might be expensive, but his origins and politics are humble. The son of working-

class parents, the new SPD leader is on the left of the party, embodying the blue-collar values that are finding ever fainter echoes in the 1990s. As German industry migrates to rural regions in the south or exports jobs to cheaper countries in Europe, the ranks of the class-conscious working class are dwindling. Even in his native Saarland, Mr Lafontaine's most noted recent achievement is the profitable conversion of a derelict foundry into a theme park.

His leftist leanings have been seized upon by Mr Kohl's party as an electoral liability. "With the election of Oskar Lafontaine, the SPD is leaving the political centre ground," commented Peter Hintze, the Christian Democrats' general secretary.

But economic reality has tempered Mr Lafontaine's socialist zeal, and he has proved adept at toning down some of the rhetoric. In foreign affairs, he remains firmly on the left, however. His passionate argument against the use of German warplanes in the Bosnian peace-keeping mission earned him loud applause on Wednesday. Mr Lafontaine's misgivings about European monetary union were not so well received. As the Christian Democrats have warned, the new leader "will whip up passions" about the common currency, even in the teeth of bitter protests from the party's Euro-wing.

Whether he resorts to the populist tricks Mr Kohl fears re-



Tête-à-tête: The new SPD leader, Oskar Lafontaine (right) with Rudolf Scharping, whom he ousted yesterday

Photograph: AFP

mains to be seen. The SPD leader might have learned the lessons of the 1990 general elections, when his chauvinistic campaign against German reunification was swept aside by voters. Mr Lafontaine, then the SPD's candidate against Mr Kohl, added up the sums and proclaimed that East Germany would cost a lot more to West German taxpayers than the conservatives were admitting. Ultimately, he was proved right, but that was long after Mr Kohl romped home in triumph. The memories of that fatal misjudgement of the nation's

mood are still vivid. After 13 years in the wilderness, the Social Democrats would be loath to suffer another defeat in three years' time and are therefore keeping their options open. That task may yet fall to Gerhard Schröder, the strutting prime minister of Lower Saxony, who does not disguise his burning ambition to take on Mr Kohl. Whether he gets the chance or not, from now on the going will get a lot tougher for the Chancellor, and life in the SPD will be a lot more interesting.

Pilot scheme has chauvinist overtones

Peter Weizman is "perhaps" a male chauvinist, he acknowledges, but has no regrets about his criticism of Israeli government policies. Described as moving "from figurehead to hammer head", the 71-year-old President has been getting into a few scrapes lately. His latest was with Alice Miller, a soldier who won a legal battle to become a military test pilot.

Mr Weizman, himself a former fighter pilot, says he didn't mean to offend her when he called her "Maelele" — "Missy" in Yiddish — and wondered if she had ever seen a man darn socks. Asked on television if he was a chauvinist, he replied: "Perhaps, perhaps," adding, "I think there is some criticism I need to take to heart, and I will take it to heart."

The pilot issue has long been a Weizman *bête noire*. Asked

several years ago why Israel had no female air force pilots, he proclaimed: "The best men to the cockpit, the best women to the pilots."

The President, whose role is largely ceremonial, has been critical of Israel's peace agreements with the Palestinians. "I thought the pace was too fast. I felt duty-bound to say so," The Tourism Minister, Uzi Baram, thinks he should simply shut up. "Weizman is president for better and for worse," Mr Baram said. "For a long time, it has been for the worse."

Pele is a rarity among black Brazilians: an opinion-maker. Now the sports minister and retired football star wants to spur others to do something about a country in which blacks are prominent in sport and entertainment, but not in gov-

PEOPLE



Pele: Rare opinion-maker

ernment and the military. To improve their lives, he told the newspaper *Jornal do Brasil*, black Brazilians must alter the racial make-up of Congress. "If the black man wants to improve his social level, he

must put our people in Congress, people who will defend our race and resolve our problems," he said.

"On the other hand," Pele added, "the lack of black congressmen has a good side, in that today politicians have a bad reputation of being corrupt. At least blacks don't carry that burden."

The kidnapping of Rigoberta Menchú's cousin's baby has been solved. Guatemalan police have arrested the child's mother, Cristina Menchú Zapeta, and husband, Miguel Velasquez Lobos, for abducting their own son on 4 November in an extortionist attempt.

Police say the couple had asked Ms Menchú, the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize winner and human-rights campaigner, for a loan but she had refused them.

The boy's father, they said, subsequently took 22-month-old Juan Carlos to his own mother's house, telling her he was having marital problems. Ms Menchú then received a demand for \$500,000 for his safe return. No money was paid, and the child was found a week later, having allegedly been abandoned in a field.

While Juan Carlos was unhurt, Ms Menchú's reputation may have sustained some damage. After the boy disappeared, she was quick to blame the government, saying the kidnapping was designed to scare her away from political activity. Even some of her supporters would like to do that. They have criticised her for allowing herself to be sucked into a system she has long opposed.

Maryann Bird

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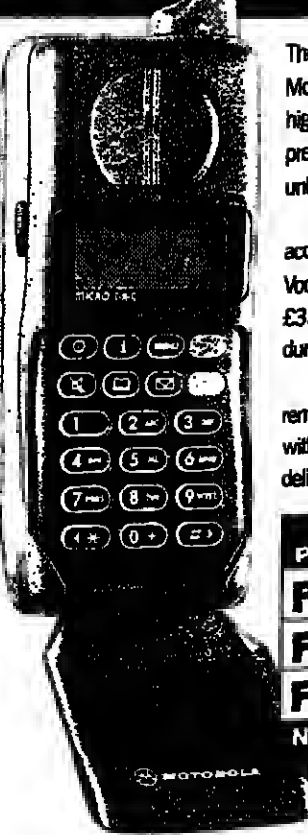
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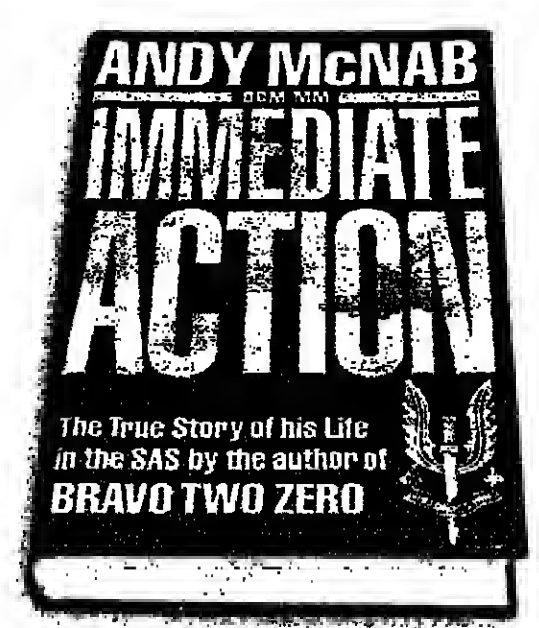
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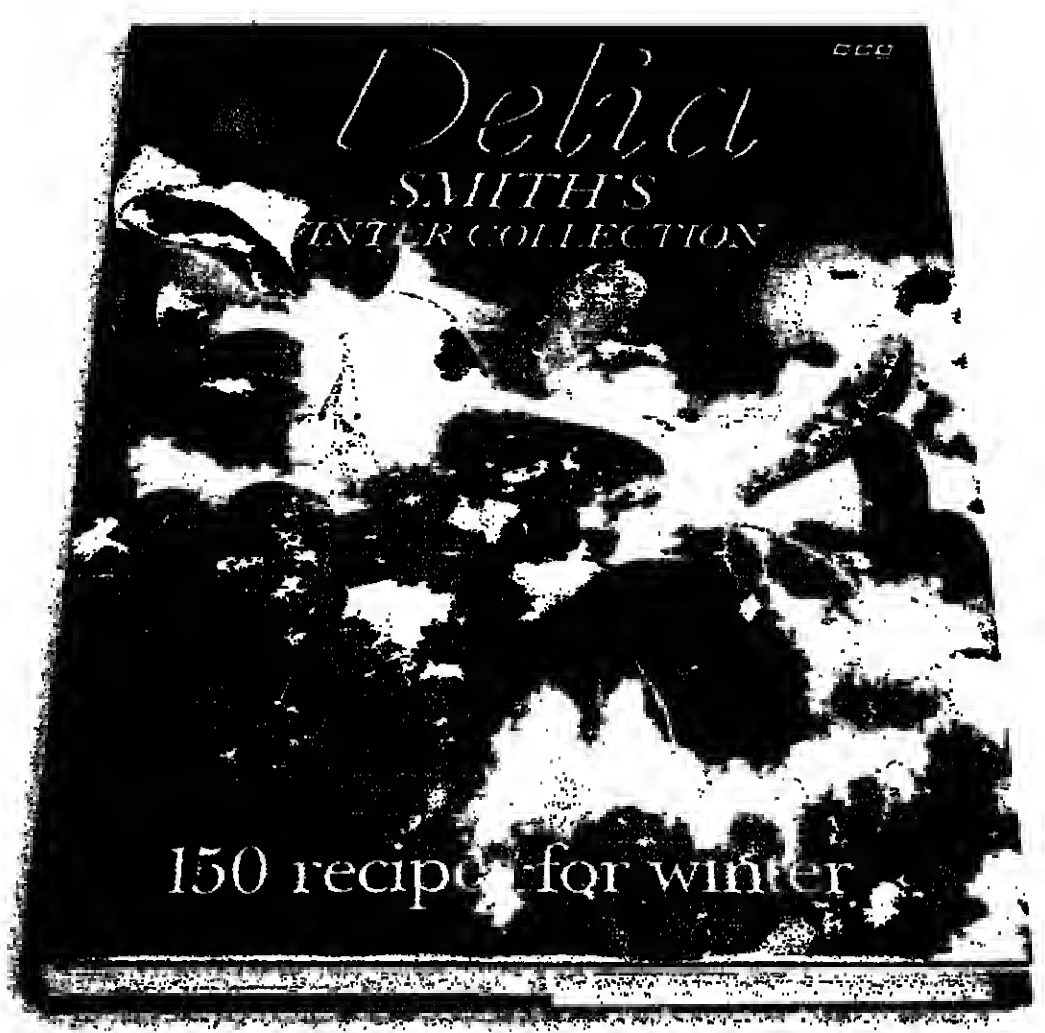
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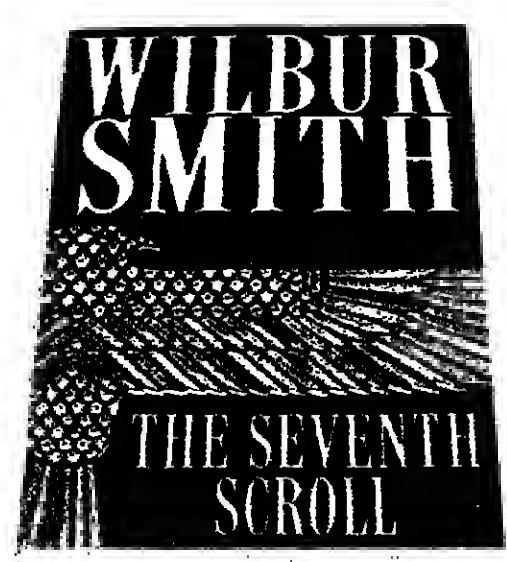
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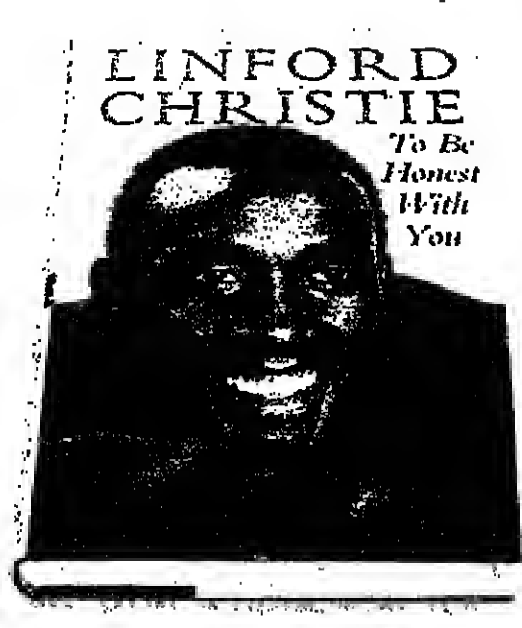
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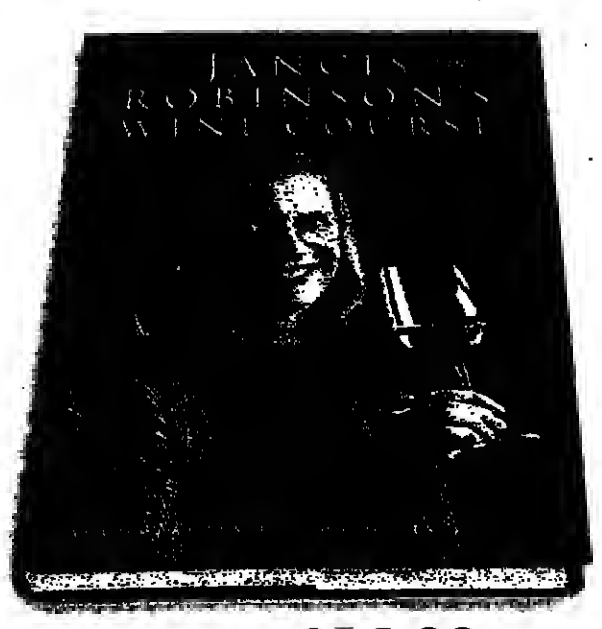
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Algerian elections:
Confusion
the 'bal

Bank threatens
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السؤال الأول

Algerian elections: Despite blood-curdling threats from armed Islamist groups, people did turn up to cast their votes

Confusion dominates the 'ballot for peace'

ROBERT ASK
Boushau, Algeria

In the yard of the Ahmed Arona Preparatory School, Sheikh Mahfoud Nahnah held aloft two frightened birds. "With these pigeons," he shouted to the camera crews, "I send a message of peace for Algeria and for the whole world." At which point, the candidate released the two terrified black and white birds into a mulberry tree. Tatty old pigeons, feathers falling out but too tired to struggle when a youth snatched one by the wings and hauled it back into the crowd. Sheikh Nahnah was on his way to vote.

It had all been billed a little more dramatically. *El Watan* had promised us "the longest day" while *Le Tribune* decided that the very act of voting in Algeria's presidential elections would bar the fundamentalists from power. "If you vote, you die," concluded *Le Main*'s cartoonist of the Islamist threats against those going to the polling booths. "If you don't vote, you die," he went on, referring to those who claim that the elections were the last chance to avoid full-scale war. "So, vote and die." If the thought was unoriginal, it at least reminded you of the small inside-page article - inside because government press laws have decided that it should be that way - recording the death of 16 "terrorists" in various police and army ambushes across the country.

So first, the facts. Algerians did vote yesterday. Despite the blood-curdling promises of the armed Islamist groups, men and women turned up at the fortress-like polling stations to

cast their ballot in the first poll since the military-backed regime suspended parliamentary elections in 1992 - elections which would have been won by the Islamic Salvation Front (the FIS), which is banned and forbidden to participate in yesterday's "step in democratisation".

But what were Algerians voting for? Were they voting against the FIS by ignoring the threat of their armed Islamist supporters? Were they legitimising a presidency that is of doubtful legitimacy by the mere act of turning up at the polling stations? Or were they legitimising ex-General Liamine Zeroual as President by voting for him anyway? Could Sheikh Nahnah stand a remote chance of winning? And what were all those Algerians doing who voted for the FIS three years ago - up to 56 per cent of them if the FIS themselves were to be believed - when polling stations opened? Sheikh Nahnah, the Islamist of the better-heeled classes - whose Hamas party boasts a Palestinian *infada* poster with a broken Star of David in its offices but has as much in common with the Palestinian Hamas as the Tory party does to the Shining Path - was in fine form outside Algiers. There were veiled women and middle-aged men in robes turning up to vote - too frightened to talk to reporters but all expressing the vague hope that the poll might mean an end to violence - and the girls ululated when Sheikh Nahnah laid hands on another bunch of pigeons.

"This is for Algerian independence," he shouted as he threw another old bird into the air. "And this one is for tolerance. And this one is for the

image of Islam." The creatures fled in terror. "And this pigeon is against terrorism and violence," he bawled. "And this one is for peace and security." Independence, peace, tolerance, the true Islam, security, an end to violence. How easy it was to hurl these birds into the sky under the Algerian midday sun.

Sheikh Nahnah never cared much about Islam - he talked about democracy all the time because he's afraid of Islam, a supporter of the more intellectual Islamist presidential candidate, Nourredin Boukhrouh (presidential chances zero) muttered later.

"He has no vision at all; he just wants to get elected. Zeroual will stay. *Le Pouvoir* (the establishment) wants to keep him. Things will continue as they did before. Algeria will go on burning."

So confident was Mr Zeroual that he didn't bother to take up all the television time allotted to his campaign - he was too busy representing Algeria at the United Nations - but the intellectual classes, the military, the old *nomenklatura*, will have found it difficult to resist the chance of voting yesterday for a man who has promised sta-

bility, a return to democracy, an end to war.

Sheikh Nahnah, once an acquaintance of FIS leadership, will create an Islamic republic, his enemies say.

Said Saadi, the leader of the Berber "Front for Culture and Democracy", will - according to his enemies - launch a civil war if Sheikh Nahnah wins. So why not vote for Mr Zeroual?

Back in party headquarters, Sheikh Nahnah's men were resili-

sistent. Hamas support was more spontaneous than Mr Zeroual's, they said (true - men flocked to hear Sheikh Nahnah, but it needed drum-rolls to tell Mr Zeroual's boys to start cheering). "The government's armed Communal Guards are opening the way to the Lebanonisation of Algeria," one of Sheikh Nahnah's faithful complained. "The constitution of Algeria forbids such militias - and they have been shooting at our election posters."

Those pigeons were flying again, higher and higher. Stare at them long enough and you might have been able to forget that at some point, whoever wins, the Algerian president will probably have to sit down and chat to the FIS all over again.



Frank franchise: An Algerian woman gives a cheery V-sign as she waits with others amid heavy security to cast her vote in the country's presidential election
Photograph: Fatma Zohra/Reuters

Bank threatens to foreclose on Winnie's home

ROBERT BLOCK
Johannesburg

Winnie Mandela, the estranged wife of South Africa's President, Nelson Mandela, and the country's favourite political sideshow, is now living - literally - at the centre of a controversy: her modest mansion a few blocks away from the shacks of Soweto.

The two-storey house - a place of pilgrimage for the hordes of tourists who daily visit Johannesburg's most famous township - has been attached to her bank over mortgage arrears. According to lawyers for Amalgamated Banks of South Africa (Absa), Mrs Mandela has not made her mortgage repayments for "a long time" and the bank started foreclosure proceedings. "A warrant of attachment against the property was issued and the property was attached by the sheriff of the court last month," said Richard Nesbit, who represents Absa. "Right now, the bank is in a

The thought of losing the house that Mrs Mandela built for her husband's homecoming after 27 years in prison was more than some could bear. Yesterday, a group of German tourists outside the Mandela mansion was told by their tour guide how the house had been paid for by a famous movie star and President Bill Clinton. All reports of Mrs Mandela's financial woes, the guide said, were simply untrue.

Some former associates of Mrs Mandela suggested that her failure to pay for the house was in some way linked to her fight against the divorce proceedings started by her husband. In documents filed to the Rand Supreme court in Johannesburg last month, Mrs Mandela denied her marriage had broken down irretrievably, and said that with proper counselling there were prospects for reconciliation. On the other hand, if the President wanted to go ahead with the divorce, she wanted half his assets.

Despite poor relations with her husband and a series of scandals which continue to haunt her, Mrs Mandela still has a huge following among poor township blacks and residents of squatter camps.

The political mainstream of the African National Congress, however, continues to shun her. Earlier this year Mrs Mandela was sacked, rehired on a technicality, and then fired again from her job as deputy arts minister following criticism of her husband's government.

Several months ago police raided her home and offices to investigate allegations that her Co-ordinated Anti-Poverty Programme (Capp) was linked to fraudulent business deals.

Capp figured again prominently in this week's lawsuit by the Foster Webb Air charter company. Mrs Mandela's lawyers had argued in the Rand Supreme Court on Wednesday that she had hired a plane from the company to facilitate a diamond deal in Angola between the Angolan President, Jose Eduardo Dos Santos, and a local businessman, Ben du Preez. Witnesses said Capp stood to earn commission on the deal, undermining her defence. Mr du Preez told the court that Mrs Mandela wanted instant riches through the deal. It fell through because when Mr du Preez arrived in the Angolan capital, Luanda, Mr dos Santos said he knew nothing about it.

Mrs Mandela failed to appear several times to give evidence. On the final day of the hearing, she left for a trip to the US.



Mrs Mandela: Owes £90,000

position to sell the house by public auction if it so wishes. We are awaiting instructions from the bank," he added.

Mrs Mandela can still make arrangements to pay the 505,260 rand (£90,000) outstanding, but has so far ignored bank pleas to do so. Sources at Absa said the banking group was reluctant to foreclose on the mansion because it feared a political and public relations disaster. "The possibility of having to toss Mrs Mandela out of her home is not exactly the kind of positive image the bank wants to project," one source said.

But by yesterday it was not just the house which was in danger of going on the auction block but everything inside as well. Mrs Mandela had until close of business yesterday to pay R75,000 to an air charter company which successfully sued her this week for failing to pay for a plane she hired in 1993. If she missed the deadline, the court could attach any of her possessions not already claimed by Absa.

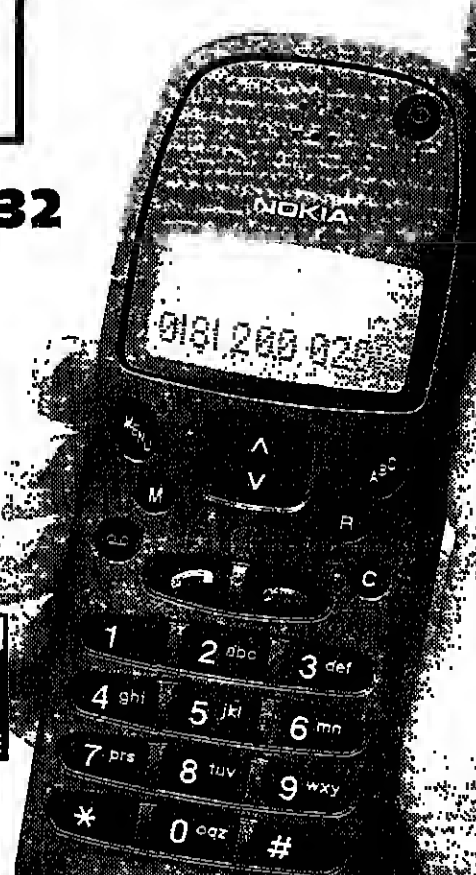
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1501/1502

Rabin investigation: Lax security exposed as Yigal Amir demonstrates how he shot Israeli Prime Minister

Killer with a smile re-enacts assassination

PATRICK COCKBURN
Jerusalem

Protected by a white bullet-proof vest, Yigal Amir rushes up to a man wearing a paper tag reading "Yitzhak Rabin" and pretends to shoot two bullets into his back. The policeman playing the role of the murdered prime minister crumples to the ground just like the real Rabin did on the night of 4 November.

"You killed Rabin, you piece of garbage," shouts an Israeli watching the re-enactment of the assassination by the back steps of Tel Aviv city hall early yesterday.

Police hold back another man trying to break through their barricade who yells: "You should have protected the prime minister like this."

Mr Amir pays no attention but, like a stage director, pushes policemen into the places where he remembers people were standing moments before he fired 12 days previously. Everyone except for a single bodyguard - 20 Shin Bet security agency guards were meant to be protecting Rabin that night - is ordered back.

When Mr Amir is satisfied that everybody is in position the policeman in a red check shirt who plays Rabin starts to bow his head to get into a limousine, the door of which is opened. As he does so Mr Amir moves smartly forward into a wide open space behind him and his right arm goes up as he points a toy gun at Rabin's back.

Police re-enactments of crimes are common in Israel but the demonstration by Mr Amir of how he killed Rabin underlines the chronic failure of Israeli security. Earlier Mr Amir pointed out to police the public phones behind the steps where he waited for hours for Rabin to leave the platform where he was addressing people at a peace rally.

ment took place, there are not many people in the streets of Tel Aviv; those who did watch were kept well back. The ferocity of the investigation - "Take off your kippa [skullcap], you dog!" shouted one onlooker - shows the depth of the anger felt by many Israelis over the killing. At one point Mr Amir appeared to grin at the abuse.

The Shin Bet security service and the police are still fighting over who is responsible for letting Mr Amir get a clear shot at Rabin. In theory the Shin Bet has taken full responsibility for intelligence and operational failures. But it has also revealed that the head of Rabin's security detail had told the police officer in charge on the night of the assassination that there were not enough men

guarding the steps down which the prime minister was about to walk. The police officer replied: "Don't tell me what to do."

Violence is still not far below the surface despite back-peddling by militant rabbis who had previously denounced Mr Rabin as a traitor. Rabbi Nahum Rabinovitch, who runs a military-theological college with 200 students at Ma'ale Adumim settlement to the east of Jerusalem, while denying allegations that he set the stage for Rabin's death, is recommending to his students that they plant mines if Israeli soldiers try to remove settlers from the West Bank.

In a tape-recording made by an orthodox moderate named Yitzhak Frankental and later published in the Israeli press, Rabbi Rabinovitch says that if soldiers come to nropt settlers he intends "to scatter the area with roadside bombs like the Arabs do". Asked about Israeli soldiers who might be killed by the mines, Rabbi Rabinovitch says that only "evil men" would obey orders to evacuate settlements.

Dror Adani, one of eight suspects under arrest as possible members of the conspiracy to kill Rabin, said yesterday he had been sent by Mr Amir to a rabbi to get authorisation to kill the prime minister. He says the rabbi turned him down but it is not known if Mr Amir was able to get the required blessing from another one of Israel's 5,000 orthodox rabbis.

Shimon Peres, the acting prime minister, says he will also take over as Defence Minister when he announces his new cabinet next week, Israel radio reports. This means that Ehud Barak, the former chief of staff, will take over as Foreign Minister. The Defence Ministry will play a critical role in organising the redeployment of Israeli troops from Palestinian cities on the West Bank.



Fatal moment: Amir finds his 'target', a policeman in a red shirt acting as the Israeli leader

Photograph: Reuters

Gingrich admits budget tantrum

RUPERT CORNWELL
Washington

The US budget row degenerated into petulant farce yesterday as the White House heaped ridicule on Newt Gingrich for an outburst of pique which the House Speaker admitted had helped prompt the government shut-down.

The rumpus started at a meeting with reporters on Wednesday, at which Mr Gingrich complained about the shabby treatment accorded him and the Senate Republican leader, Bob Dole, aboard Air Force One during the round up to Israel for the funeral of Yitzhak Rabin 10 days ago.

"Every President we had ever flown with talked to us at length," the Speaker said, but not Mr Clinton. "You just wonder where is their sense of courtesy ... Was it a sign of utter incompetence or lack of consideration, or was it a deliberate strategy of insult?"

The crowning insult appears to have been when the Congressional delegation was asked to leave by the back door of the President's plane at Andrews Air Force Base at 4am on 7 November. Pique, Mr Gingrich confessed, had helped harden his line on the budget. "It's petty ... but I think it's human."

Such a chance to ridicule its arch-enemy was too much for the White House to pass up. Leon Panetta, the President's chief of staff, called the Speaker's behaviour "bizarre and petty" and it was outrageous that the government had been shut down "because his ego wasn't stroked". The White House also released photos taken aboard Air Force One showing Mr Clinton deep in conversation with Mr Gingrich and Mr Dole.

The New York Daily News meanwhile skewered Mr Gingrich with a front page depicting him as a screaming toddler with nappy and bottle, below the headline "Cry Baby." Newt's Tantrum, it continued, "He Closed Down Government Because Clinton Made Him Sit at Back of Plane."

For ordinary citizens the inconvenience grows. More than 750,000 federal workers are laid off, with scant hope of a breakthrough before the weekend.

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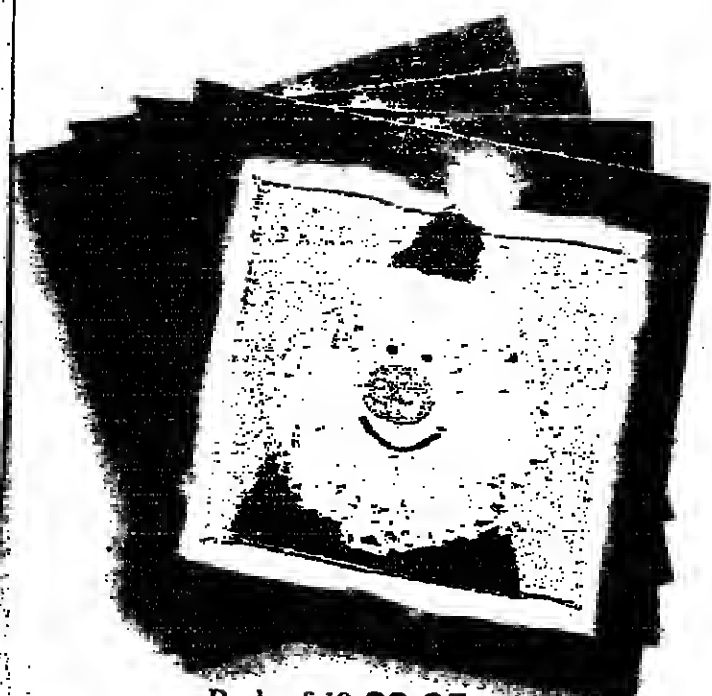
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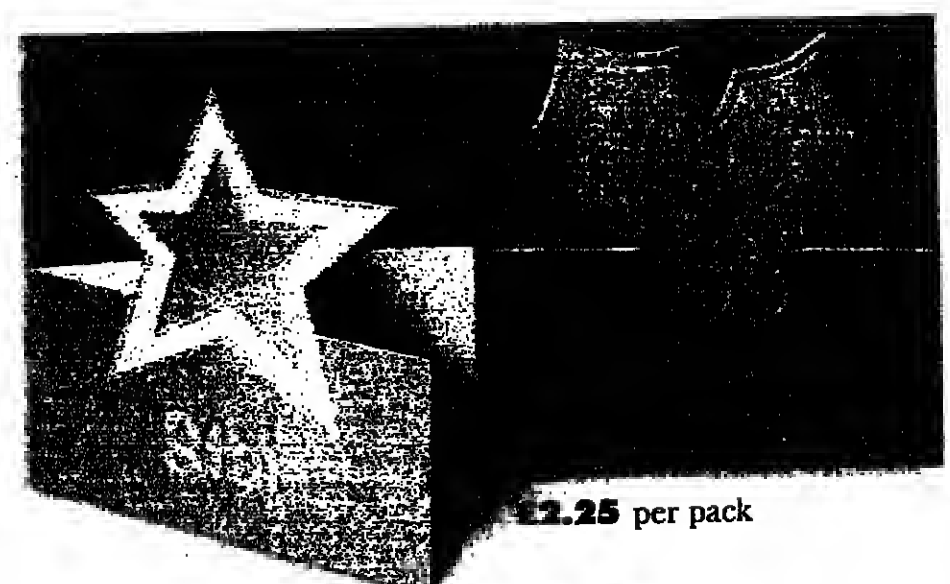
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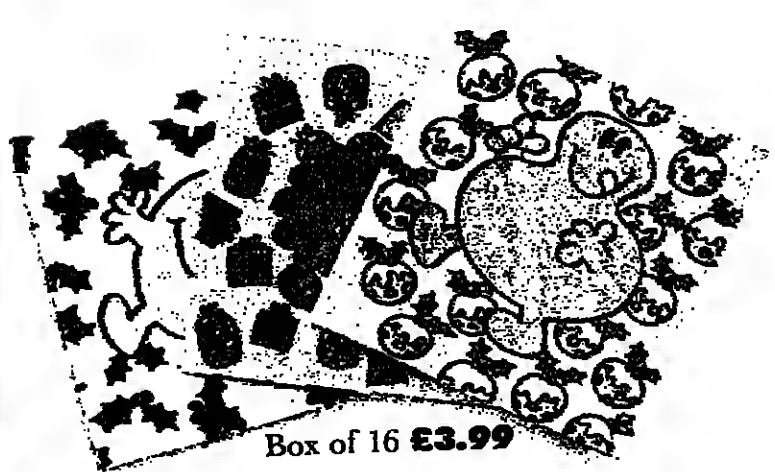
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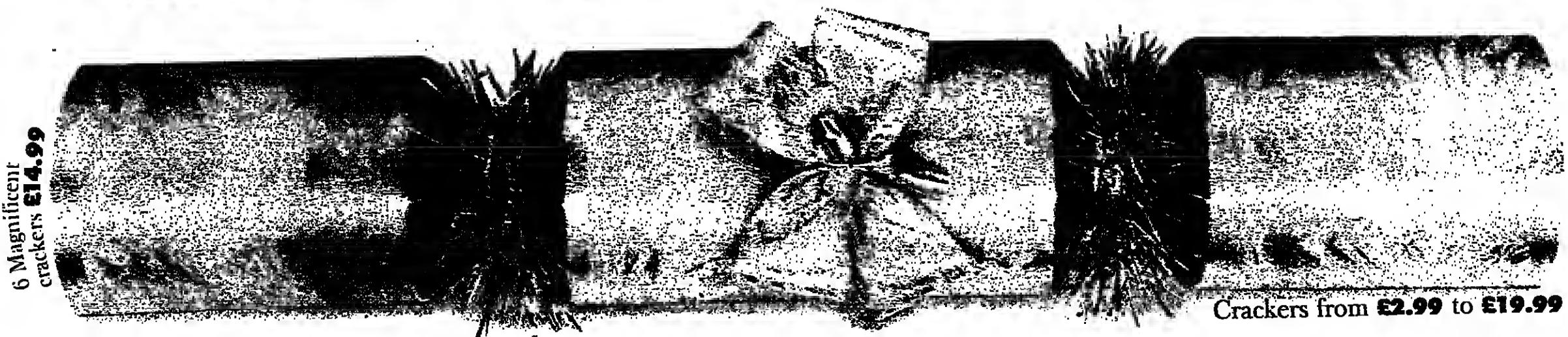


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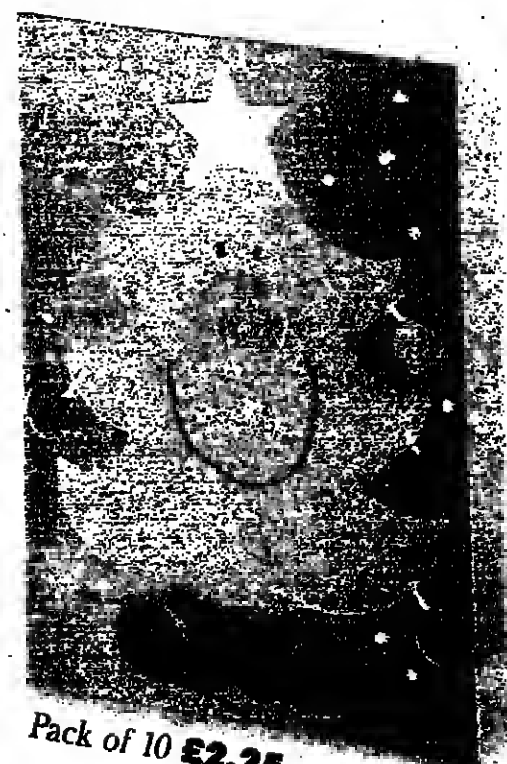
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Ian Paisley, leader of the Democratic Unionist Party
The idea of sitting down at the same table as Sinn Féin is anathema to him. Opposes Dublin's involvement in talks about Northern Ireland. Would probably boycott round table conference, at least initially.

Gerry Adams, president of Sinn Féin
Has called for immediate all-party talks. Says Britain only raised issue of decommissioning as a precondition after the ceasefire. Argues that no ceasefire in Irish history required surrender of weapons before comprehensive talks.

John Hume, leader of the nationalist SDLP
Says all party talks should start at once. Argues that the important issue is not whether the IRA still has arms, but whether they plan to use them. Is convinced that Sinn Féin is committed to peaceful politics.

David Trimble, leader, Ulster Unionist Party
The IRA would have to decommission arms, and perhaps disband altogether. But if the IRA surrendered even a few weapons, Trimble would come under heavy pressure from the British Government to join talks.

John Bruton, premier, Republic of Ireland
Ready for all-party talks now. Favors dropping the decommissioning precondition. Has proposed new approach whereby talks would go ahead six weeks after an international commission had established Sinn Féin's good intentions.

John Major, Prime Minister
Demands that the IRA begins to decommission weapons before Sinn Féin joins talks. Wants international commission to arrange terms for dealing with IRA's arsenal. But Government has backtracked before, could do so again.



Will they ever get round that table?

Is the once unthinkable now possible: a lasting peace without a political settlement in Northern Ireland? Jack O'Sullivan reports

Today more than 80 republican and loyalist prisoners will walk free from Northern Ireland's jails. Their early release shows how the peace process can still deliver results. But today's scenes will mask a dangerous reality: progress towards a political settlement, the vital underpinning of peace, is in deep trouble.

Fifteen months after the IRA laid down its arms, all-party talks look like no more than a distant hope. Britain will not sanction them until the IRA makes at least a token surrender of arms. The Provisionals have, in a rare public statement, refused point blank to make the gesture, leaving neither side with much room for manoeuvre.

Meanwhile, the relationship between the Irish Republic and Britain – the rock upon which a settlement could be built – has deteriorated of late. President Clinton's planned visit later this month to Belfast, Dublin and London may be abandoned and, in any case, holds little prospect of breaking through the impasse.

Worse still, there are signs

that guns and bombs are being taken from arsenals that have remained undisturbed for months. A week ago the Irish police discovered 1,700lbs of explosives just across the border in the Republic. Police believe that the massive bomb was to be used in an attack on

It would be wrong to assume that frustration will persuade the IRA to unpack its Semtex

a security target in Northern Ireland.

Amid the political stalemate, is peace breaking down?

No, is the immediate answer. Last week's foiled bombing was not the work of the Provisional IRA, by far the best-armed republican element. The blame

has been laid on the military wing of Republican Sinn Féin, which broke away from the Provisionals in 1986. It is a small, insignificant group, which claims to be the guardian of purist, uncompromising republican ideals. The activities of this fundamentalist splinter group do not signal a general breakdown in the cease-fire, to which the IRA apparently remains committed.

But the fact that a bombing was even considered indicates a change in the atmosphere in Northern Ireland. A few months ago, as one republican remarked, even extremists would not have contemplated such a "spectacular". They would have feared being rounded up by the rest of the republican community for endangering potential gains from the peace process. Now, after such a long stalemate, the opprobrium is diminished. There seems to be less to lose.

So does this mean it is only a matter of time before the Provisional IRA eventually takes up arms again?

There is certainly frustration among northern republi-

cans. Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Northern Ireland Secretary, speaks of the many changes since peace broke out. But, complain republicans, most are security measures that would have been ordered if the IRA had been defeated, rather than concessions to a supposedly potent force.

Many republicans feel that the potential gains envisaged one year ago have not been fulfilled. Twelve months ago Sinn Féin was on a roll. Albert Reynolds, the then Taoiseach, was at one with Gerry Adams and prepared to press Sinn Féin's case with London. In contrast, Mr Reynolds' successor, John Bruton, is far less friendly with Sinn Féin. He won nationalist plaudits by attacking London last weekend, but Mr Bruton is by instinct anti-republican. He wants to woo the Unionists and has as a consequence cold-shouldered Sinn Féin, thereby alienating Mr Adams.

It would, however, be wrong to assume that republican frustration is about to persuade the IRA to unpack its stores of Semtex. Mr Adams has demon-

strated no desire for a return to the killing. He seems to have accepted some time ago that military victory was not achievable in Ulster. Were he to lead his troops back into battle, he would lose whatever influence Sinn Féin has acquired over the past two years in Dublin and Washington.

Additionally, no matter how slowly politicians go about the task of creating long-term agreement, there is little community pressure to restart their campaign. This is not 1969, when Catholics were being burned out of their homes and the IRA was expected to play a protective role.

So, with the IRA likely to remain confined to barracks, can we stop worrying about a return to violence? Probably. It is now quite possible to imagine a lengthy period, perhaps even years, in which an absence of violence continues in Northern Ireland, despite a lack of political development. This is a prospect that few commentators would have predicted back in September 1994, when the IRA laid down its weapons. At

that stage most people, notably within the British government, thought the cease-fires would soon falter.

The receding threat of violence may indeed be allowing John Major the luxury of not pressing ahead quickly with developing a political settlement. His key concern right now may not be to bolster peace with political change but to make sure that talks begin only when conditions are right. This is a delicate task. The history of all-party discussions in Northern Ireland is of boycott by at least some of the main players. And even if discussions do get going, they usually collapse in acrimony.

Mr Major has probably accepted that Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionists would not attend an all-party conference, at least until it was well under way. But he must persuade David Trimble, the recently-elected leader of the more moderate Ulster Unionists, to come on board. Talks without him would be a waste of time.

It may therefore serve Mr Major's purposes to delay all-

party talks as long as possible, so that Mr Trimble can be persuaded to join the process and stick with it.

All of this analysis suggests the slow rate of progress in Northern Ireland should not necessarily be seen as provoking a crisis in the higher reaches of the IRA and hence an outbreak of killing. But there is an important risk from delay. A peace that was not underpinned by political change would to some extent be unstable. There is a danger that it could be vulnerable to breakdown, brought about not by the

IRA but by an unfortunate conjunction of events that had no single author.

Last summer, Ulster offered a glimpse of these dangers. There were the riots over the early release of Private Lee Clegg, who had been convicted of murdering a Catholic joy rider. A head-on confrontation between nationalists and unionists followed about an Orange march through a Catholic part of Portadown. As disturbances escalated there, and in riots on Belfast's Ormeau Road, it was possible to see how Northern Ireland might once again descend, almost accidentally, into a spiral of violence.

Everyone knows that the last time communal disturbances got out of hand and turned into the Troubles, it took 25 years before all the participants stopped the killing. The risk of such an unplanned deterioration should, as much as the thinking of the IRA's military command, preoccupy those politicians who think they can delay settling Northern Ireland's constitutional future.

The history of all-party discussions is of boycott by at least some of the major players

Wilkes's

Wilkes was not alone in giving a private cheer at Brian Mawhinney being sprayed with orange paint by Asylum Bill protesters outside the House of Commons. The video of the incident was apparently played more than 10 times over lunchtime by gleeful BBC staff at the nearby BBC Westminster Studios at Millbank. The chairman of the Conservative Party has few friends at the BBC after railing against the corporation for left-wing bias at the party conference, and some were said to be cheered up enormously by the video.

There may also have been a faint cheer from inside the Blue Bunker itself. All is not well inside Central Office since the arrival of the Ulster Hardman, who gathered his staff for a pep talk yesterday. Morale has plummeted, the former head of communications, is regarded as a symptom of a deeper malaise.

Nor was there much sympathy in the Commons. One of those close to the chairman quipped: "He was overcome with emotion."

John Ward, the Prime Minister's parliamentary private secretary, is an unassuming chap, who stays quietly in the background. But Wilkes hears he deserves a medal, and possibly the modern Russian equivalent of the Order of Lenin.

Ward was all that stood between Major and a monumental gaffe over the premature reports of the death of Boris Yeltsin.

Wilkes can now reveal the full story. Tory backbenchers were settling down for Prime Minister's question time when a pager went off in the chamber, belonging to Alan Duncan, Brian Mawhinney's parliamentary private secretary. The message came from Tim Collins, temporarily restored as head of communications at Central Office. It said the BBC was about to announce that the Russian president was dead and wanted a reaction from a minister.

Panic set in on the Conservative



Mawhinney: orange disorder

backbenches. "We'll have to tell the Prime Minister," said some of the younger, more eager MPs. But Ward is made of sterner stuff. "It will put him off his stroke," he said, and refused to pass the message on. As a result, Major was not told and he was spared the redder of red faces.

Major and Boris owe Ward one for that.

Wilkes has tried his best, kept debates going when nobody wanted to speak, put down planted questions for ministers, laughed at Major's jokes, and even voted for the blasted Government, but loyalty counts for nothing these days. The Backbencher of the Year Award has slipped by for another year. The word around the room is that it will go next week to John Redwood, the unsuccessful challenger for Major's crown.

Perhaps next year Wilkes should throw his hat in the ring, if that's what it takes.

Wilkes always goes to the best parties, and the Nolan recommendations have done nothing to impinge on his convivial lifestyle. So it was that Wilkes was delighted to quaff champagne at Spencer House, the Princess of Wales's former family townhouse in St James's, for the 10th anniversary of a leading PR firm, the Communication Group. Guests included Alan Wilkes, Labour's Doug Henderson and Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Northern Ireland Secretary, whose former special adviser Jonathan Caine has joined the PR firm. Then it was over to the launch party for the collected essays of Norman Lamont, where Wilkes drank House of Commons claret and rubbed shoulders with the old gang, including Lord Parkinson and Sir Robin Day.

Wilkes is glad to report that Lamont has lost none of his gift for the well-turned phrase. Rejecting the range of figures showing the economy has turned belly-up, Lamont insisted that they were all wrong. "It's a false dusk," he giggled.

Wilkes is a constitutional monarchist of the first order, in spite of the efforts by the Princess of Wales to advance the cause of republicanism. Wilkes needs to hear only two words – "President Thatcher" – to confirm his royalist instincts.

But there is a limit. Wilkes can put up with Prince Charles's watercolour of Windsor Castle signed "C 90" which greets visitors at the entrance to the MP's offices at No 1



The Prince: gunning up on Wales

Parliament Street, and even the unflattering portrait of the Prince which makes the heir to the throne look like a paranoid bloodhound. However, Wilkes learns with deep dismay that the PoW has been brushing up on the Principality by having a private briefing with the Secretary of State for Wales. First he has a chat with Redwood, the Vulcan; now he's been having a private word with his teenage successor, William Hague. Neither of them is Welsh, and both know as much about Wales as Wilkes's left shoe.

Des Wilson and Olly Grender, both former leading lights in the Liberal Democrats, have become the Joanna Lumley and Jennifer Saunders of the PR world. Des, now with the PR firm London News, shared a table at a glitzy PR awards dinner with his friend Olly, who has moved to Shelter. As the night wore on, Des grew more bitchy about the winners, which was a bit tricky for Olly, darling, because, as Joanna would say in *Absolutely Fabulous*, you see, sweetie, she was one of the judges, and his agency didn't get a prize.

Staff at the Department of Health broke into joyous cheering at the State Opening of Parliament. Was this a rush of royalist blood to their heads? No, simply they had heard that their old boss, Virginia Bottomley, had been turned back from Parliament by the police, because she was 15 minutes late for the ceremony and her car could not get through the security. Funny how she brings out the best in people.

Wilkes's old chum Lord Wakeham has been privately boasting that he has had an immediate effect on Fleet Street as the head of the Press Complaints Commission. He has closed down the telephone line set up by Sun hacks for dancing partners of Prince William to switch on his social activities now that he has started at Eton. The "snog line", as it was informally known (Wilkes cannot imagine why) was a breach of the boy prince's privacy, and thus Wakeham intervened.

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Beware a new wage spiral

How does a pay rise of 5 per cent sound to you? It is higher than inflation and well ahead of the average pay settlement. It is certainly better than the public sector will get this year. Yet once you stop to think about how much harder you are working, the new contracts which make your job less secure, the growing profits your company is making, and the soaring salary of the chief executive, then you might not feel it is unreasonable.

Your reaction matters a great deal to the economists who are watching the dispute at Ford over the management's pay offer of 4.75 per cent. If pay settlements start rising following the Ford example, we could be in for the wage boom that the Bank of England fears. But if the rest of the economy remains cautious and subdued, unaffected by the deals done at Dagenham, then pay and inflation could keep crawling along at their current rate.

In the past Ford's pay settlement mattered a lot. Wage increases at Ford used to be "the going rate" — they set the standard in the car industry and for the rest of manufacturing. But it would be surprising if the old situation still prevailed. Wage bargaining has become increasingly decentralised and the workforce less unionised. Pay setters in the service industries probably focus far more on their own profits and skill shortages than they do on manufacturing pay. And as employment in the service sector goes on rising, while employment in manufacturing continues to drop, then events at Ford matter that much less in the context of the whole economy.

Although Ford's pay packets may no longer be the trigger that causes rising wage bills across the economy, what happens there may still reflect the feelings of workers and management elsewhere. The Ford workforce is so fed up its members are prepared to strike for what they see as their fair share of the proceeds from productivity gains of the past few years — whether it be through wage rises above 5 per cent, or cuts in the working week in line with European colleagues. There could well be similar demands for wage rises across the economy which have been bottled up after several years of wage constraints.

Service-sector wages won't necessarily be immune to these pressures either. For although weekly earnings in the services remain subdued because there are so many part-time workers, hourly earnings for full-time workers have already been increasing at a rapid rate — 4.6 per cent in the year to last spring.

So just because the rest of industry and the economy no longer blindly follows Ford's lead, doesn't mean our pay is not about to start going up. The optimistic view is that the labour market has changed in such a dramatic way, that the old British wage inflation spirals have been defeated. The pessimists believe it is just a matter of time before old pressures resurface — wage claims could even start accelerating in the spring. The Bank of England is right to remain worried about wages, for it could take months, even years, to be sure who is right. By which time it could be too late.

Keep fruit on our streets

Life must be hell for the man from the council. All those complaints from aggrieved tenants, noise-averse neighbours, unproprietors of uncollected rubbish — and so little time or money to deal with them. At least that's what they keep telling us. In which case, why has Derbyshire Council spent so much effort in getting a judgement against an Ilkeston greengrocer, against whose pavement display of fruit and vegetables no one had complained? The phrase "have they nothing better to do?" comes irresistibly to mind.

Ah, yes, says Derbyshire, it's not so simple. True, no one had objected to Brian Godfrey's sidewalk plums, and yes, there had been no accidents or incidents, but the law is the law. "Pavements are for people and have to be kept free of obstructions for the benefit of pedestrians", apparently.

This argument mirrors that of Camden and Westminster councils in London, when this summer's balmy heat brought the tables and chairs of dozens of bistros and cafes out on to the capital's grimy pavements. Justifying the imposition of a series of fines and the sequestration of some offending furniture, Westminster's Robert Moreland declared himself to be acting on behalf of "the partially sighted, disabled and pram pushers", forced to negotiate "unauthorised" tables and chairs (authorised ones, presumably emit a high-pitched noise to warn the partially sighted and fold down into ramps on the approach of wheelchairs or huggies).

There is much in Mr Moreland's

argument. There must indeed be some restriction on the rights of traders to take over the public's footpaths — even though there seems to be none on the rights of cable companies utterly to disrupt the ability of almost anyone to go almost anywhere. Café owners, greengrocers and stall-holders must be considerate towards pedestrians, and where real nuisance is caused must be restrained.

There is a sneaking suspicion, however, that what is at issue here is not so much public nuisance as an official desire to control everything. Mr Godfrey, as far as we can see, was causing no problem. And, lest we forget, Derbyshire council last featured in these columns when it instituted a policy of not employing smokers. It isn't just the Labour councils which seem to be prone to jobsworthism.

As reported today, Tory Westminster is trying to insist that it is entitled to charge fruiterer Eric Carter for his pavement overspill — despite the fact that the space does not belong to the council. Their attitude appears to be that if something exists in public space, then they should get the benefit from it — or close it down.

Most people would like to see the growth of a lively (if regulated) pavement culture in Britain. The colour of fruit stalls and the hum of cafes is infinitely preferable to a dingy mélange of rubbish bins and cracked paving stones. Cars parked and moving — are far more of a problem to pedestrians and street-users than any exuberant displays of artichokes. The man from the council should get his priorities right.



I think it's paint ... whatever it is, it won't come off

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Does BSE harm people?

From Dr R. G. Will and others
Sir: Professor Richard Lacey asserts (Another View, 15 November) that BSE is "now established as a cause of sporadic Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) in humans".

This is not true. CJD occurs round the world with a relatively constant incidence, including countries that are free of both scrapie and BSE. In 1994, the incidence of CJD in the UK was lower than in the Netherlands and in Austria, which are both free of BSE. The occurrence of CJD in dairy farmers in the UK is unlikely to be directly linked to BSE, because CJD occurs with a similar frequency in dairy farmers in France, Germany and Italy, which are countries with a minimal potential occupational exposure to BSE. The occurrence of CJD in teenagers in the UK is tragic, but this does not establish a link with BSE, because CJD has previously been described in teenagers in other countries in which there could not possibly be a link with BSE.

The primary remit of the CJD Surveillance Unit is to determine whether there is a link between BSE and CJD by detailed investigation of all cases of CJD in the UK. We have not yet established a link and the evidence on which this statement is based has been recently published in an Annual Report. However, it is clearly imperative to continue to study closely the epidemiology of CJD, as the long incubation periods in CJD and other prion-protein diseases indicates that it will be many years before a theoretical link between CJD and BSE can be excluded.

Yours faithfully,
R. G. WILL
JAMES W. IRONSIDE
M. ZEIDLER
National Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease Surveillance Unit
Western General Hospital
Edinburgh
15 November

When costs increase Taiwan will say ta-ta

From Mr Anthony Smallhorn
Sir: Your Business Comment "Britain the back door to Europe" (15 November) is absolutely correct [about the nature of the investment by Chungwha in making cathode ray tubes in Scotland], but your arguments and warnings must be taken further. Taiwan and Korea were once cheap labour economies, which is why the Japanese, in particular, invested heavily in them. When labour rates, and manufacturing costs, for simple products such as televisions went too high the Japanese simply pulled out.

Four years ago, after manufacturing in Pusan City on the south coast of Korea for more than 20 years, a Japanese company closed a factory manufacturing exactly the same product as Chungwha will be making in Scotland. Three thousand people lost their jobs, and the same company set up a production

line in Thailand. Sooner or later, labour rates in Taiwan will rise too far, and the company will move again, probably to an emerging African country. The warning for us is that it is even easier to move out of Britain as we have one of most free money markets in the world, and there is no skill in manufacturing this type of product.

Some £80m and a few thousand jobs may generate a few votes for the Conservative Party, and will bring relief to an area where unemployment is well over 2 per cent above the national average, but let us be warned by what is happening all over Asia. When they are ready, the Taiwanese will simply pull out of Britain. This will not build an "enterprise culture".

Nobody in Westminster has any concept of "enterprise" beyond the ability to invest in businesses linked to privatised utilities, the NHS and local gov-

ernment. Its latest "enterprise" wheeze is Business Link. To qualify, you have to employ more than six people, so a country solicitor, who has never exported a thing but has three offices and more than six full-time employees, qualifies for a 50 per cent grant to "teach him how to market"; while everywhere small, genuinely enterprising British manufacturers struggle to survive by exporting, using money borrowed at high interest rates from high street banks, and have little or no help from government.

British manufacturing industry is still in decline. Unless this is halted, there is no hope of an "enterprise culture", or a bright future, for this land.

Yours faithfully,
ANTHONY SMALLHORN
ASRA: Industrial and Engineering Designers
Hitchin, Hertfordshire
15 November

How the EU can get serious

From Mr Robin Teverson
Sir: Your leader today "The £2m question" (15 November) on fraud and waste in the EU correctly concludes "It is time the member states got serious about the problem". But you are short on prescriptions for making them do just that. The Court of Auditors, equally, makes no recommendations on what Europe can do to stir the member states into action, but there is no shortage of suggestions from other sources.

In the Liberal Democrat group, we have been pressing for a few simple changes that could quickly bring results. First, the European Commission needs a bigger stick to wave at the member states if it is to persuade them to act. In some areas it can withhold funding if it thinks fraud is going unchecked. Extend that to all EU-funded schemes, and you would soon see action.

Second, we need to make transparent a process that is all too opaque. Reports on fraud drawn up by the member states are prepared in secret, which leaves us all in the dark and suggests that they have something to hide. The reports must now be published.

Third, the European Parliament should be allowed to set up committees of inquiry. As a body independent of both the commission and the member states, it is well placed to arbitrate where culpability is in dispute.

These ideas are not the whole answer, but they are part of it, and they have growing support. In an aside yesterday, one member of the court suggested that, were it able to make such recommendations, similar ideas would be among them. For the sake of efficiency, accountability and, not least, lower taxes all round, it is, as you say, time to get serious.

Yours faithfully,
ROBIN TEVERSON
MEP for Cornwall and Plymouth
West (Lib Dem)
European Parliament
Strasbourg
15 November

Ecstasy v Prozac

From Dr Joanna Nakielny
Sir: In the article "Ecstasy and the agony" (Section Two, 15 November), Polly Toynbee asks what the difference is between a licensed medicine, such as Prozac, and a "street drug", such as Ecstasy. One very important difference is that licensed medicines have undergone extensive and rigorous testing in clinical trials. The results of these trials are then reviewed by regulatory authorities, such as the Medicines Control Agency here in the UK, which must satisfy itself as to the safety, efficacy and quality of any proposed new medicine before granting it a licence.

Ecstasy, by contrast, is an illegal drug that is not licensed for the treatment of any medical condition.

Yours faithfully,
JOANNA NAKIELNY
Associate Medical Director
Lilly Industries
Basingstoke, Hampshire
15 November

Round and round the round table

From Sir Fred Catherwood
Sir: Without John Hume's courage and persistence, there would have been no ceasefire in Northern Ireland, so we all owe him a great deal. But he is wrong to insist on yet another roundtable between the parties ("It's good to talk. Mr Major", 15 November).

Once he brought Sinn Féin into the process, he created conditions which made an Irish settlement only possible by bilateral negotiations between the two sovereign governments.

It is not just that the Unionists will not sit down with — as they see it — a gun pointed at their heads, but that even if they accepted John Hume's arguments, they would have to make the settlement stick with all those Unionists who argued, when it came to a referendum, that a treaty agreed under threat of force was not binding.

By agreeing that the next step is yet another round table, the

British Government is now predictably boxed in by the inoperable preconditions laid down by Sinn Féin and the Unionists.

And for what? The last round table was a disaster and there is no reason to suppose that a new one would be any better.

The two governments have already achieved an agreed position. They each need to negotiate bilaterally with the parties who look to them and then with each other; and IRA arms and British troops can now be part of that negotiation.

At some point they must persuade the parties who look to them that they have got the best deal they can.

Then, and only then, should they bring them round a table, pen in hand, to sign the settlement.

Yours faithfully,
FRED CATHERWOOD
Cambridge
15 November

Le Shuttle U-turn

From Mr Christopher Laming
Sir: Eurotunnel has made a spectacular U-turn in its Le Shuttle marketing campaign, which now includes such familiar items as early-booking discounts, a third-off-duty-free promotion, cheap day-trips and, above all, discounted ticket prices.

Sir Alastair Morison, chairman of Eurotunnel, has continually criticised the ferry industry for "suicidal" price wars and other such competitive activity. Indeed, according to him, it is the actions of the ferry industry which have done so much to destroy the cross-Channel market. But his

criticism is nonsense, as any student of basic economics knows. Eurotunnel doubled capacity, and then moaned when competitor activity intensified. They tried premium pricing their product, as they told their shareholders they would, but not enough customers wanted to buy. So now they have given that up and joined the economic world they helped create.

In doing so Le Shuttle has become another ferry company. The difference is that it cost its owners £100m to set up. Yours faithfully,
CHRISTOPHER LAMING
Head of Communications
Stena Line
Ashford, Kent

Tape that

From Mr W. Stephen Gilbert
Sir: Monique Roffey ("Clive laughed, and suddenly I was sixteen again", 13 November) refers to "the live filming" of *Clive Anderson Talks Back*. Now what do you suppose live filming is? If the show goes out live — in other words, in its full spontaneity — it is not going to be filmed.

But it doesn't go out live; nor is it filmed: it is recorded on tape. Videotape is as important a medium as film. It's a pity that commentators and even television practitioners have taken to describing all television as "filmed" even when it is not.

Yours faithfully,
W. STEPHEN GILBERT
London, N8
16 November

Letters should be addressed to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number. (Fax: 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk) Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Lovely Rita, the prostitute who doesn't offer sex

Although I visit London at various intervals, or, to put it another way, as little as possible, I am still surprised by the amount of personal messages placed by people inside London phone boxes — announcements about a new Mexican girl in town, or busty Australian beauty, or Naughty Nina, and so on.

People who have mobile phones won't know about all this — indeed, people may well buy mobile phones for the single puritanical purpose of getting away from the constant array of prostitutes' cards they are forced to look at in phone boxes — but I know all about this, because every time I go innocently into a London phone box I suddenly get culture shock all over again.

But on my last visit to London I saw something quite different in a kiosk. I saw a prostitute's card which read as follows: "Rita promises you NO Hanky Panky! Hands off Rita! Keep your distance with lovely Rita! Ask for nothing and you won't be disappointed!"

This sounded a bit out of the ordinary. A girl who took your money and then didn't sell you her body.

Or was it code for something so recondite that I didn't even know about it?

I was intrigued. I was very intrigued. I was so intrigued that I made a note of the number.

Let's be honest — I rang her there and then.

"I am doing a survey of London phone box cards," I improvised hastily when Rita answered the phone. "I was just wondering what sort of customer you were catering for."

"Why don't you come along and find out, sir?" she said, and gave me an address. "Bring a video if you like." Then she rang off.

I think if she had called me "darling" or "love", I wouldn't have gone along to see her. But being called "sir" reassured me. I felt safe. I went along to see her.

"Did you bring a video?" she said. "No matter. There's plenty of other things to do."

"What kind of video did you expect me to bring?" I said nervously. "Sex, you mean?"

"Don't be stupid," she said. "Football videos are what punters



MILES KINGTON

normally bring. Wildlife documentaries are next popular. I draw the line at feature movies. They take hours."

"You mean — people can only have sex while their favourite TV programme is on?"

She stared at me. "Sex? What are you talking about? They come here to get away from it."

Gradually, as she talked, the truth came out. Most prostitutes catered for men who had little or no sex life at home, but Rita catered for another minority — those who had too much, men who suffered from sexually demanding wives or who for some reason had gone off the whole thing.

"You'd be surprised how many

men are just settling down for a quiet evening with a book or the TV when they are dragged off to bed by a concupiscent wife," said Rita. "All they want to do is be left in peace and quiet."

"That's what I give them here. They bring round the programmes they've missed and watch them here, while I potter around doing the housework or sewing. There's one bloke who always brings his ironing round and likes to watch me do that, while we chat. Of course, I have to charge him extra."

"But football on video is the main choice of men. It's often on late at night, and they're dragged off to bed for sex by the wife at that time, so they tape it and bring it round here, and watch it as they would have liked to watch it. I've got several regulars who do that. Some games I see four or five times over. And I must always remember never to reveal the result if I know it in advance."

Does she have to watch the programmes as well? Is that part of the deal?

"No, not necessarily, although you do find the occasional man who

gets a real kick out of explaining football to a woman in technical terms. So many women obviously get turned off by sport that when the men say to me, 'Did you see the way he drew his man and created space there?' and I say, 'Very nice running off the ball, too' — one of the phrases I've picked up, don't know what it means — they go red with pleasure."

"But what they like best, if you can believe it, is for me to dress up in something very revealing or skimpy and come smooching past saying, 'Are you coming to bed now?'"

Why do they like that?

"Because it gives them a chance to shout at me, 'Oh, go and take a jump in the lake,' or, 'I wouldn't go to bed with you if we were on a desert island together!' — all those things they've longed to say to their wives, but have never dared. At least they know that when they come to a prostitute like me, during the hour they spend here they are quite free from sex."

"Funny old thing, human nature, isn't it?"

I think she may be right.

Auntie in a flap over the F-word

BBC guidelines are the closest we have to a new prayerbook, but heaven help the taste committees

The man from the BBC who looks after taste and decency projected a silent graphic on to the screen. He ran through it fast, but I did catch the top of the list of words with the percentage of the public who thought them totally unbroadcastable:

***	74 per cent
*****	70 per cent
*****	70 per cent
*****	55 per cent
*****	55 per cent

What the BBC proved at its seminar on taste and decency this week is that the subject is easily reduced to farce.

The BBC invited its leading critics to debate with programme controllers and governors for a whole day of filth and violence. Clips from Ben Elton, *Backpack* and *Lady Chatterley* interspersed the discussions. For the battle over broadcasting standards represents the moral dilemmas argued over in every household, every newspaper, every pub. For lack of any other binding institution – no widely attended church, or any other generally accepted moral standard-bearer – the poor old BBC must bear the brunt of representing to society what it thinks of itself, what it thinks its standards are. BBC guidelines are the closest we have to a new prayerbook, and as a result the best battleground for all our moral anguish.

Having recently come from inside the walls of this sometimes monstrous, yet magnificent citadel, the internal discussions day after day were some of the most stimulating and intellectually absorbing but also sometimes the most mind-numbingly desperate nonsense. The burden of responsibility of a compulsory licence fee weighs heavily on BBC executives: £86.50 a year is a harsh poll tax on every household. It puts some of the

poorest into prison, for non-payment of fines – many of them people who barely watch the BBC and are positively hostile. It makes everyone jumpy, an organisation of panicky paranoids who quiver when the most mindless leader writer or backbencher says boo. Accused by many, including many at this week's seminar, as cultural imperialists, ivory tower dictators, arrogant and unaccountable, the truth inside is quite different.

Of course, the corporation arrived at the seminar well-armed with audience research showing how much more liberal attitudes towards sex on television have become in the past 10 years. The most conservative groups had shifted greatly, with older women moving from 33 to 41 per cent tolerance of sex and nudity. Changing attitudes towards homosexuality were most marked, with a 20 per cent drop in the numbers who find it offensive.

However, the fact that the viewers' values are on the slide was certainly not going to mollify the moralists. One of them put the dilemma succinctly: if the broadcasters keep pumping out sex, nudity and rude words, they themselves change public sensitivity. There is something devious about debasing the currency and justifying your behaviour by proving you are in tune with the people when you are a prime cause of the cultural shift you are measuring. If more people find gays on television acceptable now than 10 years ago, that must be in large part because in the past 10 years it has featured in virtually every soap.

What, someone asked, does the BBC think it is doing? Does it set moral standards and stick by them, does it follow whatever its polling says its viewers' standards are, or does it see itself in the forefront of positively setting out to change (and by implication liberalise) public opinion? This is tricky territory, since a simple "yes" to



POLLY TOYNEE

The BBC is not a pulpit, nor is it a mere crowd-pleaser

any of these is plainly both absurd and presumptuous. The BBC is not a pulpit, but nor is it a mere crowd-pleaser. It is not a slave to opinion polls, but an innovator and a leader, then of course it does have standards of its own, but trying to define them and the eels slip through the fingers.

Five words can cover a multitude of difficulties. From the director-general we had "eternal values, truth and quality, excellence of thought and execution." Eternal values? Good heavens, we have just had a presentation that shows there are none, with everything constantly on the move.

For many, the argument descends here into unsatisfactory greyness and murk. But the truth of the matter is murky. Bernard Manning, Jim Davidson or Ben Elton – who makes you laugh, and who offends you most? Taste is so impossibly personal that only the grossest trespassing on new territory draws a clear consensus. (There is far more agreement on violence.)

The moralists want everything clear-cut. News and Current Affairs, with their strict guidelines, scored well. How

much easier to make rules on how much blood, how many bodies, how much detail in the Rosemary West case. Though Martin Bell has been saying that he thinks television over-sanitises the horror of war, with all that banging of the guns and, unrealistically, no one apparently blown to bits as a result. So even here there is some doubt.

But when it comes to drama and humour, the sands shift so fast beneath the feet. With heavy heart I heard one governor announce that the seminar showed the clear need for more guidelines to cover these grey areas. Heaven help the luckless teams of taste-formers who will sit on those committees. Canute-like, the BBC can try to defy the cultural waves of Tarantino or Stone, the Playboy channel and worse that flow in from elsewhere with every tide. It can trim the worst blood and sex off Hollywood movies, but it cannot command the global culture of the ether.

The moralists will shake their heads and say, there you go again – this moral relativism takes us down the path to perdition. They see a steady decline in standards that can only lead to the sewer, though they never say where they would have stopped the clock. If they mean the golden year of 1952, year of coronation and conquest of Everest, perhaps we should show a night of programmes from that cultural desert of an era.

The moral panic model of society is a slippery slope to the cesspit. But another model is a continuous line of change with some higher standards and some grosser vulgarisations. To be sure, *Blind Date* has become pornographic, *Don't Give Up the Day Job* is a humiliation too far, and *Lady Chatterley* was plain bad. But there is now little of the casually sexist, racist, homophobic beastliness of yesteryear, and the drama is unrecognisably more subtle and sophisticated.

Of course, the BBC tries to wriggle out of its unwelcome role as the nation's moral guardian and weather-vane. Sidestepping the trap of whether it is an opinion-former or opinion-follower, instead they talk of the fragmenting audience and the duty to give every licence-payer something indispensable. Gone are the days when a nation sat down together to watch the same things at the same time. In other words, if you don't like the rude bits, make a cup of tea and watch the other side until the wildlife comes on.

However, forced to play the moral arbiter of our times, the BBC is doomed forever to abuse from every side, damned sometimes for cultural or political cowardice and damned sometimes when it is brave. Lame and tame, some say, while the *Telegraph* lams into its dashing scoop of the year – the Diana interview on Monday's *Panorama*. The nation's Auntie is also the nation's Aunt Sally, since pleasing all the punters all the time is quite simply impossible.

Although losing some cultural power as channels proliferate, the BBC will always have schizophrenic obligations. Bring in the crowds, bring on the excellence, do those programmes that no one else will do and yet be popular. Please the uneducated who pay the same as the erudite, but please don't be vulgar or low.

So it is hardly surprising that whenever the BBC presents its face in public, it covers its confusion in enough high-flown nonsense to make a politician blush. Sanctimonious language will always be a BBC imperative: "Our responsibility is to ensure that all that we do is driven by a moral purpose which rests on the basic pillars of decency, rather than the shifting sands of taste." Well, humbug. The BBC sits on the same sandbank of time as the rest of us.

The sins of admission

One of the great outlets for creative writing is about to be denied to the nation's 17-year-olds and their parents.

University vice-chancellors are planning to allow sixth formers to fill out their Ucas forms after A-levels, rather than months before. In a hyperactive fortnight between August and September they will offer places based on their real, rather than predicted, A-level grades.

But since when was dealing in realities part of filling out a university application form? A Ucas form should be a heady mixture of predicted grades and imagined lives.

Children who believed they had no flair for creative writing discover untapped sources of fictional inspiration. Parents who had brought up their offspring to have regard for veracity and fair play reconciled themselves to being economical with the truth or having to keep an underwolf for the next three years.

I long for a national study by the British Psychological Society of one year's Ucas forms as it could tell us so much about 17-year-olds in Britain: little about their lives, but tons about their creative abilities. Rarely can so many people have spent so much time and effort writing about non-existent achievements, interests and nobility of character for the annual autumnal sport of pulling the wool over the eyes of what is enduringly the last bastion of innocence, naivety and gullibility remaining in Britain – university admissions officers.

May I help admissions tutors, those guileless men and women, by offering my services as translator for those enigmatic, extra curricular phrases on the forms now pouring into their offices? I am gregarious = I have sex quite often.

I am an avid reader = I don't read.

I play the violin = my mum made me have lessons when I was 11.

I play football = ditto my dad.

The whole thing is a charade, because 17-year-olds simply don't have the breadth of interest that universities so confidently expect: They are too busy taking exams, and too busy being 17. That means listening to records, going to parties, the pub, the cinema and the shops – passive, trivial and unpolitical activities that would turn an admission officers' stomach.

Seventeen-year-olds do not join amateur dramatic societies, work in hospitals in the evenings or take the Duke of Edinburgh Award on a rainy Saturday morning. They prefer to stay in bed or have fun, and if they're not going to have fun when they're 17, then when will they?

As it happens, the only achievements that admissions

officers should take any note of are the ones they universally scorn: extra curricular achievements in school. To gain high office there and suffer the scorn of one's peers by working, or ingratiating yourself for it, takes real character.

In that regard, I was particularly shocked to read in the Independent/Ucas guide for university applicants some advice from an admissions tutor at my alma mater, the University of Kent. Urging applicants to list out-of-school activities, he said wistfully: "We don't care if you've been a milk monitor."

Why should such world-weary cynicism horrify me? Dear reader, I was a milk monitor.

We are dying breed, those of who can dimly remember spilling that daily third of a point over which every pair of short trousers had annoyed us that morning. We few, we happy few, we banned of milk monitors. Could there have



DAVID LISTER

been a better preparation of university, nay for life?

There was early training in life skills as I used every ounce (let us stick with imperial measures in matters of the third of a pint) of my eight-year-old charm on the school secretary to get the job. The lining up of milk and distribution to an entire year group also demanded precocious leadership skills. And, what is more, the experience politicised me.

As a student a decade later, I marched on a demo from that same university which now harbours the anti-milk monitor reactionaries, to protest against the ending of school milk all together by the then education secretary one Margaret Thatcher. "No milk from an old cow" was one of the more ingenious banners I recall from that day.

So my advice to students as you fill out those forms is to be not so much economical as ludicrously extravagant with the truth.

And my advice to admissions tutors is ignore the lot, everything that is except the real, genuine and hard-won achievements, the sweat, toil and grovelling that result in the magic words "perfect" or "year head" or "house vice-captain." Those denote the future high-flyer.

Scratch any Cabinet minister and you will find a former milk monitor.

Paul Gregg and Jonathan Wadsworth advise Kenneth Clarke to take a penny or two off the lowest rate

The kindest cut for everyone

To murder an old adage, two things are certain in life: death and that Kenneth Clarke is going to cut taxes in the upcoming Budget. What we don't know is whether he will benefit from the tax cuts and by how much. They could be staged over several years. They could involve a penny or two off the basic rate of 25p, or even the abolition of inheritance tax. In such a highly charged political climate it is probably naive to hope that the nature of the tax cuts should fulfil any function other than picking up votes. But some kinds of tax cuts are a lot more desirable than others. And with possibly billions and billions of pounds at stake, it is worth engaging in the debate.

Increasingly people without work live in a home where no one else has a job

The real question is not tax cuts for the rich versus tax cuts for the poor; it is how you use tax cuts as a way of getting people back to work. For the growing numbers of working-age Britons who are dependent on benefits form a serious constraint on any government achieving its economic, social and tax objectives. Benefit expenditure on working-age claimants and their dependants rose from £19bn in 1978/9 to £45bn in 1994/5 – and spending has grown despite frequent attempts to scale back eligibility and reduce the real value of benefits.

So why has spending on benefits grown so fast? Part of the problem is the number of people who are out of work. But this isn't the whole story. Non-employment follows a familiar pattern, rising in recessions and falling in recoveries.

But the distribution of work has also changed. Increasingly people without work live in households where no one else has a job either – so there is no one with a wage to support the family, and everyone has to depend on benefits. The number of households with no earned income grew from 8 per cent in 1979 to 20 per cent in 1994. Even during economic recovery, the proportion of workless households



Ken Clarke: will he do the right thing?

Photograph: Reuters

has scarcely fallen. What this means is that most of the new jobs created have gone to individuals living in households where another adult is already in work.

Once families end up on benefits, they have a harder and harder time getting off again. In the past, if your whole family was out of work, you would be quicker finding a new job than someone else who had other family to depend on. Now those in workless households take twice as long to find new work as those whose partners are in work. Benefit dependence has grown not because new families are having to claim benefits, but because those on benefits already are taking much longer to get off. In 1979 the typical workless family spent 18 months

on benefit before anyone in the family found a job. By 1994, this had risen to four-and-a-half years.

The core of the problem – according to a growing body of evidence from left and right – is that work increasingly does not pay. For the family out of work for several years is hardly better off when one of their members finds a job – largely because the wages available in the kinds of jobs they are usually able to get are so very low. For these "entry jobs" are incredibly badly paid and are worth in real terms no more than they were in 1979. A third of entry jobs pay less than £4,000 a year and two-thirds less than £7,000. Virtually none of the jobs that the unemployed are able to get pay wages that the average British worker would

recognise. Combine this with a benefit system designed for a different era, and the incentives to take these jobs are minimal.

Taxes make matters worse. Astonishingly these entry jobs are still taxed, often at the introductory rate of 20p. And government policies since 1992 have not only been regressive, they have added to the problem of lousy incentives to find work. Increasing council rents, the council tax, fuel tax, increases in NI contributions and failures fully to uprate tax allowances have all reduced the gap between benefit incomes and low-paid work.

The question for Kenneth Clarke at the end of this month is whether he can use his tax cuts where he failed with his tax increases, to help

people off benefits and into work. And cutting the basic rate of 25p is not the answer. For most lowest-paid workers only pay tax at 20p; they never make it into the basic rate band. If he wants a tax cut to make a difference to his benefit figures he should look at cutting the 20p introductory rate. Not only would it reach more of the low-paid, it is also far more cost-effective than cutting the basic rate. Because the introductory band is narrow (£3,200) relative to the basic rate, you could use the same amount of money to generate a much bigger rate cut.

For the same price as 1p off the basic rate (£3bn), you could cut 5p off the introductory rate and bring it

Government policies since 1992 have added to lousy incentives to find work

down to 15p. We have a realistic possibility of achieving a 10p introductory rate after the next two Budgets.

Of course tax cuts alone aren't enough. For those on means-tested benefits such as Family Credit or Housing Benefit would lose most of this tax give-away in withdrawn benefits – unless withdrawal rates are lowered in line with the tax cuts over the £3,200 band range. Thus the marginal tax rates and the marginal benefit withdrawal rate can be cut, while take-home pay rises. This could create substantial improvements in work incentives without dragging more people into Family Credit.

Tax cuts are no panacea to end the growth of benefit dependence. However, combined with other initiatives currently being tried out by Peter Lilley at the DSS maybe, just maybe, Britain can get more for its tax cuts than a feel-good factor in the opinion polls. So, Ken, if you are going to cut taxes, do the right thing – cut the 20p rate, give tax cuts to everyone and help prise open the unemployment trap.

Paul Gregg and Jonathan Wadsworth are researchers at the Centre of Economic Performance at the London School of Economics.

Generation Why



by Tony Reeve and Steve Way

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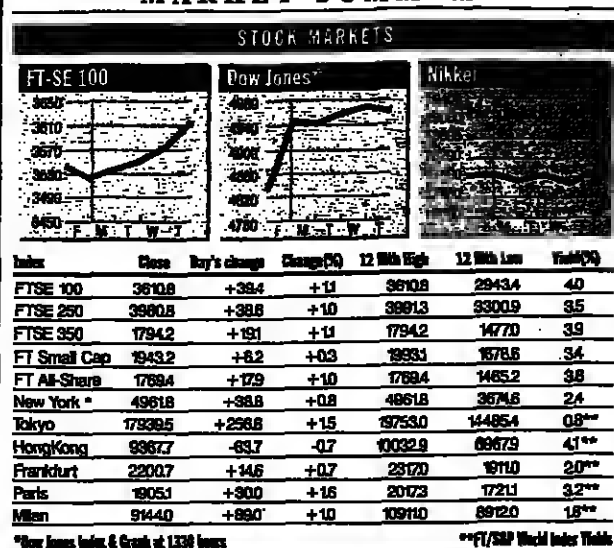
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MARKET SUMMARY



Still the same questions to be answered at C&W

COMMENT

'It is easy to see why BT might be interested in Cable & Wireless ... but there are enormous obstacles to overcome if such a marriage is to be consummated'

Lord Young of Graffham has been so closely associated with Cable & Wireless's refusal to address the issue of its stock market undervaluation that his retirement has been seen as a panacea. Plainly it is not, however, for even though there is now a set date for his departure, the viability of the global telecommunications federation is as unclear as ever.

For a company that remains wedded to the idea of a global network of companies, C&W's eagerness to spell out the economic benefits of the federation yesterday smacked of defensiveness; it would not have looked out of place in a takeover bid defence document. The figures do, however, put the debate on to a more scientific footing, even if outsiders can only take the company's word for the claimed £90m a year boost to annual profits from better buying terms and shared product and service development.

If the figures can be believed, they are not inconsequential in the context of a company expected to make profits this year of about £1.3bn. But they hardly represent a stumbling block to a takeover of the company by a global telecoms player such as BT or AT&T with even greater access to the claimed economies of scale.

It is easy to see why BT might be interested in C&W - it is keen to establish a presence in the Far East for its "concert" business, telephony operation, Hongkong Telecom, mainly owned by C&W, would be an excellent launching pad. But there are enormous obstacles to overcome if such a

marriage is to be consummated, with regulators at home and the Chinese government to be satisfied along the way. Furthermore, a change of ownership would certainly be used by the Hong Kong authorities as a way of screwing down the relatively generous regulatory regime the company presently operates under.

Even so, there is a treasure trove of hidden value in C&W still waiting to be unlocked, and a sum-of-parts valuation can quite conservatively put a price of 60p a share on the company compared with the current 42.5p. Furthermore, the strategy conundrum remains as problematic as ever, with the company pulling in two different directions - the monopoly supplier in Hong Kong and other far-flung territories, and the upstart attacking the monopoly in Britain. Lord Young or no Lord Young, investors will ask the same question. When will all that value be reflected in the share price?

A watershed for national papers

Rupert Murdoch has a simple view of the future as far as British national newspapers are concerned. He believes that one day there will be only five daily titles left. It scarcely needs saying that the Murdoch crystal ball foresees that at least two of the survivors will be his. Last night he went some way to making the prophecy come true by

announcing the closure of one of News International's five titles, *Today*.

It seems unlikely this will prove the fuse that ignites the wholesale rationalisation of British newspapers Mr Murdoch foresees (the easing of competitive pressures implied by a rise in the cover price of the *Times* would indicate the contrary), but there is no doubt that this is a watershed of sorts. Add to the closure the present fevered level of speculation over the Express titles, rumoured meetings between Mr Murdoch and Lord Rothermere of Associated, and there is quite enough to think that something seismic is in the offing.

Closing *Today* could hardly have been a difficult commercial decision to make. Harder to explain is why News bought the title from its then owner, Tiny Rowland, in the first place, or why it was prepared to tolerate accumulated losses of an astonishing £140m for as long as it did. The clear bet is that at least some of *Today's* 500,000 readers will move to other News International titles, particularly the *Times*. That view reflects Mr Murdoch's belief that newspapers are like any other commodity - price-sensitive and driven by the usual market forces of under- and over-capacity.

The circulation gains made by the *Times* since the price war began lend some support to that view. Far from proving the point that there is too much capacity in the market, however, the only effect so far of the cover price war has been to plunge large parts of

the industry, including the *Times*, into losses which, in the long term, look as unsustainable as those of *Today*.

No need to panic about Ford's offer

Has Ford set a new pay benchmark with its inflation-heating offer to UK employees? Ford regards its job as to set pay levels appropriate to its own operations and local conditions; it doesn't care a fig for what ministers think. There have been tremendous strides in productivity at Ford's UK plants, which are not far behind those in Germany. The pay offer is not a charitable reward for effort but a self-interested move in forestall unrest on production lines that have been pushed hard in recent years.

Time was when the annual Ford settlement was the bellwether for the pay round. The fact that unions have turned down 4.75 per cent has understandably sent shivers down the spines of those with long memories. If Ford's offer were to be copied across the country, the surprise fall in retail price inflation to 3.2 per cent in October announced yesterday would turn out to be a blip. In reality, however, the Ford settlement is more likely to show that the going rate has all but gone as a concept, losing much of its punch in today's flexible labour market. The latest earnings figures show a very sharp divergence between manufacturing and services.

Underlying earnings in manufacturing rose by 4.25 per cent in August and September, but by only 2.5 per cent in services. There is marked divergence within those sectors, too. In manufacturing, annual earnings growth till September was as low as 2.5 per cent in textiles, but 4.4 per cent in the car industry. In services, earnings growth was 1.3 per cent in hotels and restaurants but has been rising at 4.5 per cent in the wholesale trade.

Much more important than the "going rate" for pay increases is the rate of inflation itself. Pay settlements have all risen in the course of the year, as negotiators seek to ensure that wages do not fall behind inflation. The new and startling fall in retail price inflation could reverse the trend, if sustained.

The divergence of settlements between industries suggests that successful companies operating across national boundaries will pay better than purely domestic companies operating in Britain's deregulated labour market, where collective bargaining has faded away.

At Ford, there is only the loosest of linkages between pay settlements in the various European centres. But any company operating throughout the Continent is accustomed to dealing in an adult way with works councils and centralised pay bargaining, and like Ford will be prepared to cut a generous deal with unions when it suits. The difference now is that the rest of industry no longer has to panic when that happens.

Departure date for Lord Young fuels bid rumours

TOM STEVENSON
Deputy City Editor

Lord Young put a date on his retirement from Cable & Wireless yesterday "to end the recent ill-informed and destabilising comment, and to put the record straight". His departure immediately re-ignited speculation that BT would launch a bid for the company, to establish a presence in the Far East and realise what many observers see as C&W's hidden value.

Lord Young will leave a company still struggling to convince the City of the merits of its global telecommunications federation, but determined to press ahead with its strategy. Chairman of C&W since 1991, he will quit in February 1997. He said yesterday he had decided to put an end to speculation about his future following a spate of newspaper articles suggesting he was under pressure from institutions to quit, and alleging a rift with the company's other directors. Denying any disagreement, Lord Young said it had always been his intention to quit on his 65th birthday.

Cable & Wireless has long struggled to convince investors of the value of its federation of telecoms companies around the world, with Lord Young most closely associated with the company's failure to present its case properly and its refusal to change its strategy to realise its value to shareholders.

At times the stock market value of C&W has been barely more than the market capitalisation of the company's 57 per cent shareholding in Hongkong Telecom, its most valuable asset, although the valuation gap has narrowed sharply in recent months.

Lord Young said he would have no say in the selection of his replacement, but expected it to be an external appoint-

ment, probably another former politician with the skills to carry on his ambassadorial role around the world, especially in the fast-growing telecommunications markets of Asia.

Lord Young announced his planned departure alongside a 9 per cent rise in pre-tax profits for the six months to September. He warned that growth in demand for fixed-wire services had slowed in line with lower economic activity in some of C&W's markets, but said Mercury was back on track and pointed to sharply lower losses from start-up associate companies.

After a 7 per cent rise in turnover to £2.71bn, operating profits rose by a similar amount to £636m. Reported pre-tax profits of £815m included a £199m exceptional profit from the sale of C&W's 5 per cent stake in Mannesmann Mobilfunk, a German mobile phone company. Underlying profits of £616m compared with £567m. The company responded to persistent criticism of its federation of telecoms companies around the world by spelling out for the first time the economic value of the network. Better management of telephone traffic, sharper procurement terms and shared product and service development were worth £40m in first-half pre-tax profits, C&W said, and would add £90m to the bottom line in the full year to next March.

In the six months to September, Mercury lifted operating profits from £96m to £103m and claimed 15 per cent growth in residential lines compared with the small decline announced last week by BT and twice BT's rate of growth in domestic and international call volumes.

Following a 25 per cent reduction in staff numbers over the past year, Mercury said it had reduced its on-going cost base by £60m.

Profile, page 25

Rail privatisation: Outsiders emerge as clear favourites but still face pitfalls in franchise battle



Resurgence: planning to revive the traditions of 'God's Wonderful Railway'

GWR bidder unveils plan for extra trains

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR
Transport Correspondent

Resurgence Railways, the new rail company that is set to win the franchise to run InterCity services out of Paddington, is planning to increase the number of trains in an effort to win passengers back to rail.

The emergence of Resurgence as the favourite to take over the Great Western Railway is the surprise of the first group of three franchises which are due to be allocated next month. The company is led by a group of managers including former Trafalgar House finance director John Ansell. Resurgence is the preferred bidder - having beaten off a management buy-out team - and has until the end of next week to submit the final terms of its bid.

Mr Ansell shared a £1.3bn pay-off with two colleagues

when they left Trafalgar nearly two years ago, and he has teamed up with Mike Jones, a former BR area manager at Leeds, and Richard Morris, safety director of Eurotunnel. Mr Jones, the vice-chairman, is known in rail circles as an experienced manager who was highly critical of the high freight prices charged by BR when he was in charge of petroleum movements on rail.

Resurgence is thought to require more subsidy - currently BR requires £51m for the service - than the rival bid but has put forward a series of innovations that attracted the support of the franchising director, Roger Salmon. It wants to run more trains from distant parts of the network in Wales and the West directly into London by splitting up the existing eight-coach InterCity 125 high-speed trains into two.

The company also wants to re-establish direct services to London on routes that currently require a change to reach the capital. One insider said: "The MBO team were offering nothing new, and Resurgence came along with an exciting new package, adding to what is already a very good service."

Nevertheless, the bid faces several pitfalls. Adding trains beyond the number required by Mr Salmon means that the track access charges from Railtrack will increase.

There are also additional costs in splitting the high-speed trains because they will need a new trailer at the rear. But the team is confident that with fares being restricted to the rate of inflation and less under the new financial regime imposed by the Government, extra passengers will be won back to the railways.

IN BRIEF

Keebler frozen foods sale

United Biscuits is selling its Keebler frozen foods business to Windsor Corporation, a US foods group, for £54.8m, a week after selling Keebler's cookies and cracker business for £316m. United has now raised \$580m from the sale of Keebler's division, with only the loss-making salty snacks (crisps) business still to be sold. The division recorded a £13.6m loss on sales of £76m last year.

Cortworth flotation to raise £25m

Engineering group Cortworth will have a market value of £71.6m when it joins the stock market next month. The company is raising £25.7m from the flotation, which is priced at 150p per share. The funds will be used for expansion and acquisition. Cortworth was formed two years ago as a management buy-out from Williams Holdings, the industrial conglomerate. After the float, Williams will have a 19.99 per cent stake in the company.

Cadbury sells ITnet

Cadbury Schweppes has sold its ITnet information technology division to a management buy-out for £32.5m. Cadbury will retain a 12.5 per cent stake in the business.

Yates' shares hit a peak

The share price of Yates Brothers Wine Lodges climbed 5p to a fresh peak of 291p on yesterday's interim results, showing a 19 per cent rise in sales to £29.2m, and a 50 per cent surge in taxable profits to £3.2m. The share price is more than double last year's flotation price of 140p. Yates has 55 outlets, and wants to have 100 outlets by the turn of the millennium. The interim dividend is 1.2p. Analysts forecast that annual profits will climb from £5.1m to £6.6m.

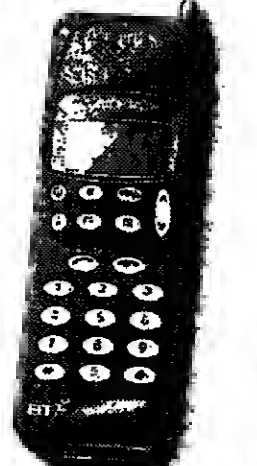
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Alarm at Boeing merger talks

RUSSELL HOTTEN

Europe's aircraft industry is on alert after reports that America's Boeing and McDonnell Douglas are in merger talks that would create the world's largest aerospace group and force thousands of job losses.

A merger, combining Boeing's dominance of commercial aircraft with MD's military expertise, would spark a fresh round of consolidation among Europe's struggling aerospace companies.

Attempts to create a single US aircraft maker would face anti-trust hurdles and intense political opposition in Washington, and analysts believe an asset swap is more likely than a full-blown merger. But European aerospace companies said that rationalisation of the two US giants would put pressure on them to follow suit.

Airbus, in which British Aerospace is a partner, said a deal would intensify global competition and underline the need for further cost savings at Europe's aerospace companies.

The four Airbus partners are talking about how the group can be restructured from a collaborative partnership to an integrated corporation. A spokesman said a merger of Boeing and MD would give a new urgency to the talks.

A spokesman for Matra Défense, the French company that wants to merge its missiles business with BAe, said: "We need more concentration and more mergers in Europe to be



Frank Shrontz: sights set on McDonnell Douglas

able to counter such measures in the US. If we do not do that, our defence industries will disappear."

Neither Boeing nor McDonnell Douglas would comment yesterday on reports in the *Wall Street Journal* that the companies were negotiating a deal, which would create a combined company worth \$35bn with a 70 per cent global market share.

Boeing, headed by Frank Shrontz, is the world's largest commercial aircraft company, but like its rivals has struggled as airlines delayed orders during the recession. MD's smaller commercial division has teetered on the edge of collapse for many years and the company has been sustained by its military aircraft sales.

Nick Cunningham, analyst at BZW, believes anti-trust problems may prevent a merger of the civil businesses, though not the military operations. "I guess it is a matter of what the Department of Defense thinks," he said. "I'm sure they're talking to each other, as everybody is, because there's

clearly further rationalisation to go in the US defence industry as there is in Europe."

The Pentagon has traditionally encouraged its military suppliers to merge, and gave its blessing to last year's \$10bn deal which brought together Lockheed and Martin Marietta. Lockheed Martin has already cut thousands of jobs.

Airbus has been gaining market share on Boeing for several years, and last year overtook its rival. But this week's news that the US company had won a huge order from Singapore Airlines came as a blow.

Both Airbus and Boeing have forecast that airlines will need to order 13,000 to 15,000 new aircraft worth over \$1,000bn in the next 20 years to replace ageing fleets.

Last year Airbus won firm orders for 125 new aircraft worth \$9.1bn while Boeing announced sales of 120 worth \$7.7bn. In contrast Boeing has already announced sales this year of over 300 aircraft, including the Singapore deal, while Airbus has just \$2 orders.

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN
Edited by Magnus Grimond

Beware the Offer PowerGen can't refuse

Shares in PowerGen have underperformed the market since September's announcement that it was in talks to buy Midlands Electricity. Confirmation that the £1.95bn takeover will go ahead has underscored investors' fears that winning the bid would expose PowerGen to more flak from Ofwat, the regulator, and the politicians.

Thus far, PowerGen has done well out of electricity deregulation, as yesterday's interim profits demonstrate. Pre-tax profits jumped 13 per cent to £135m in the six months to 1 October, but the surprise came in a half-year dividend raised 30 per cent to 6.5p. The largesse was possible because the company bought back 7.6 per cent of its shares at the government sell-off in March, which meant the cost of the interim payout rose only 18 per cent.

The medium-term plan is to lower dividend cover from last year's level of over three times to 2.5-2.7 times. But there are doubts about whether PowerGen will maintain the same level of generosity at the year-end. Although the shares rose 13p to 568p on yesterday's dividend news, longer-

term the realities of PowerGen's position will determine the price.

The case for buying Midlands rests in large part on its capacity to secure a market for a substantial part of PowerGen's output and to give access to billing, marketing and customer service expertise. The goal is to create a fully integrated electricity company better equipped to compete when the market is fully deregulated in 1998 and the lucrative supply contracts with the regional electricity companies end.

The problem is that any benefits from the Midlands customer base will not be felt in the short term. By 1998, only 16 per cent of PowerGen's expected output will not be tied up in long-term contracts with other RECs and so available to Midlands.

In the meantime, by acquiring Midlands, PowerGen will have subjected an estimated quarter of its profits to regulation by Ofwat and the possibility of a Labour government imposing tighter price or profit controls. It is also facing a continued loss of market share, which will be exacerbated by yesterday's completion of the forced

sell-off of two power stations to Eastern, and a possible fall in the price at which electricity is traded.

Long-term, PowerGen may or may not make a go of new activities ranging from overseas power generation to gas distribution. But short-term sentiment will be dominated by whether it gets government clearance to acquire Midlands. Profits of £590m this year would put the shares, up 13p to 568p, on a prospective multiple of only 10. Not expensive, but only weakly supported by a forward yield of 4 per cent.

Capital return by radio station

Sparkling results from Capital Radio have put UK commercial radio solidly in the media spotlight – and with good reason. Radio has doubled its share of national advertising to about 4 per cent in only three years, and has room to grow. Capital, one of the largest and best-managed radio companies, is taking full advantage, reporting pre-

tax profits of £26.5m in the year to September, up 48 per cent.

While it is unlikely to repeat that performance in 1996, particularly since some of the growth came from the well-timed acquisition last year of Southern Radio, Capital is expected to be able to generate 20 per cent annual profit rises this year and next.

Minor doubts earlier this year about the state of the advertising market sent the shares drifting lower, to about the 440p mark, where they have been treading water. But the 15p rise yesterday, on the back of the profits announcement, suggests doubts have been overcome for now.

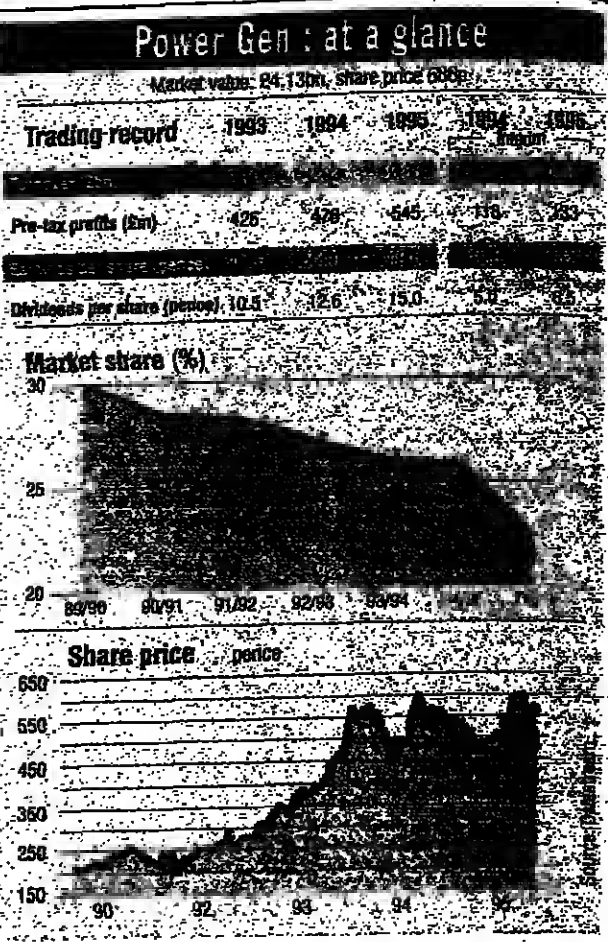
There are still a few concerns about what the company will do with its £20m in cash, and analysts have been pressing for a firmer statement of strategy from Richard Eyre and his team. Yesterday they got it: plans to bid for a commercial radio licence in Yorkshire, among other franchises, expansion into multimedia, partnerships with overseas radio companies and, of all things, a "radio-themed" restaurant.

Of the four, only the vague "multimedia" push looks suspect. For a radio company to think about investing in on-line services seems a bit of a stretch, given how many big media companies are already sniffing around this potentially cash-draining sector.

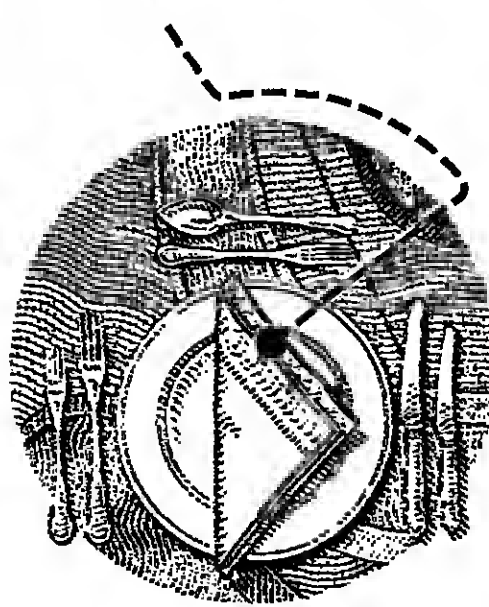
But the restaurant scheme looks a bright idea. The company is moving into offices in Leicester Square, and plans to convert an existing ground-floor restaurant into a Planet Hollywood-style hang-out, with radio memorabilia on the walls.

Plans to discuss overseas opportunities with local partners likewise look promising. The company has assured shareholders and analysts it does not intend to spend freely in markets it doesn't know. But it feels, rightly, that its sales and management skills are exportable, given the right strategic partners and provided it sticks to deregulated, commercial markets.

Core radio remains the focus, however. And with pre-tax profits likely to grow to £32m this year (30p a share) and £38m next (38p), the shares look reasonably good value at 11 times next year's earnings.

Improving business performance.
A few helpful ideas from Mercury.

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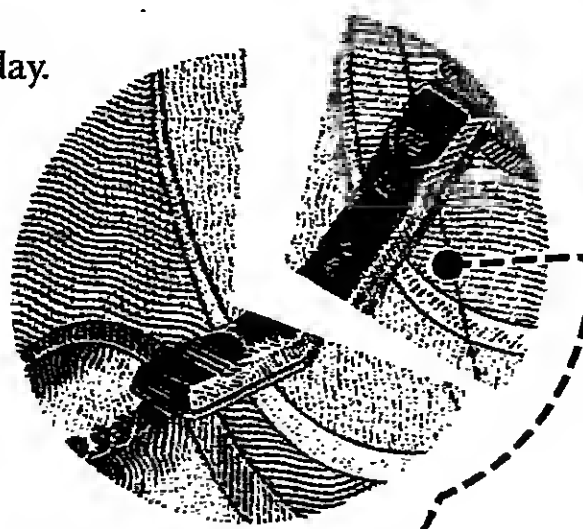
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to rejoice in
half-year ritual

Only hours to go for the happy band that is the Hewlett Packard workforce. Today Lew Platt, the computer giant's president, chief executive officer and chairman, announces the six-monthly profit share. This is not a figure to be sneezed at. Last summer every employee world-wide collected 11 per cent of basic salary.

But the announcement itself has developed into something of a ritual. Mr Platt likes to deliver the good news personally and simultaneously to all corners of Hewlett's global empire. At 1800 hours in California (1600 hours in the UK) the international workforce will down soldering irons and gather round the tannoy expectantly. The inevitable bit of static will be followed by the unmistakable voice of the illustrious leader (only the third in the company's history) as he announces the figure. This will then be followed by a traditional and resounding "Hurrah", and the money will be in the pay packets two weeks later.

Oh, by the way, Hewlett has never announced a quarterly loss since it was founded in 1939. Funny that.

Airbus Industrie has hit back in decisive fashion over the loss of the £8bn Singapore Airline order to Boeing. The European consortium has finally succeeded in suppressing further publication of Karl Sahbhagh's *21st Century Jet*, which chronicles the development of the Boeing 777. You will recall that Singaporeans ordered 77 of the offending planes this week.

"We are required to recall all copies of the book," says Macmillan, co-publishers of the book with Channel Four. "Airbus Industrie has complained."

A quick leaf-through reveals nothing too sinister. But a hint of what was to come can be gleaned from page 12 where Mr Sahbhagh writes: "Before libel lawyers from all seven continents descend on the publisher of this book it is worth pointing out that..."

Cocking a snook at the anti-nuclear movement, Barclays Bank attempts to take the public relations pressure off Shell by embracing the Beaujolais Nouveau. Various branches were offering free tastings yesterday, with Holborn branch even hanging out French flags. In the City, Balls Brothers reported that the light and fruity number, "which shows no excess of the yeast that has marred some of the previous vintages", had sold 500 bottles by 10am at £4.20 each plus VAT. We shall have to see how it goes down in Tahiti.

Never reluctant to issue guidelines where none are needed the Americans have published the definitive guide on how to look acceptably scruffy at work.

A booklet from Haggart Clothing, a brand new company that's been around for years (sic), describes the finer points of dressing down, the wearing of more casual clothes than tradition dictates.

"Like the information highway and political correctness, dressing down is off and running before anyone's figured how it works," warns Haggart. "Though 75 per cent



Fashion scene: The art of dressing down at the office

of Fortune 500 companies now have some sort of dressing down policy, they rarely spell it out in a memo. It's almost as if they are testing employees to see who will screw up."

Should you feel the sudden urge to dress down, follow the code. Instead of traditional, standard colour silk ties, switch to cotton and knit fabrics. "Show appreciation for a holiday or display your favourite dog."

Come to think of it, there was a polo neck seen at SBC Warburg recently.

Hectic trading at Credit Lyonnais where some entrepreneur has been trying to shift a load of rugs in the run-up to Christmas. Telephone callers to the bank could even hear prices being quot-

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Capital Radio (F)	67.4m (51.7m)	39.2m (22.1m)	24p (16.5p)	10.25p (7.5p)
Cable and Wireless (F)	2.71m (2.54m)	0.15m (0.07m)	10.6p (11.1p)	3.00p (2.83p)
CE Health (F)	82.0m (91.4m)	10.3m (16.36m)	-3.3p (5.5p)	3p (5p)
Parsons & Sons (I)	70.6m (60.9m)	-4.90m (5.79m)	24.8p (28p)	3.80p (3.51p)
PowerGen (F)	1.10bn (1.14bn)	133m (119m)	13.4p (10.8p)	6.5p (5p)
Sage Group (F)	248m (205m)	27.7m (23.8m)	7.9p (6.2p)	1.70p (1.7p)
S&P Group (F)	67.5m (55.2m)	-0.82m (2.47m)	7.1p (3.8p)	0.70p (0.5p)
Saunderland (F)	13.2m (11.1m)	1.97m (1.41m)	8.48p (6.14p)	1.75p (1.35p)
Tring (I)	12.0m (10.2m)	1.45m (2.56m)	2.13p (3.08p)	1.42p (1.42p)
Telegraph (F)	182m (190m)	25.6m (33.8m)	11.2p (17.7p)	-
Times Brothers (F)	27.2m (24.5m)	3.19m (2.13m)	5.4p (4.2p)	1.2p (1p)

(F) - Financial (I) - Industrial (M) - Mergers

Brutal push

Lord Young, who has announced he is to quit the telecoms giant, will leave an air of lost opportunity at its Mercury offshoot. Paul Valley reports

Five years of crossed lines at Cable & Wireless

In my wallet I carry two symbols of corporate failure. They are my Mercury phonecards - £10 and £2 respectively. Mr Cholmondeley-Warner, Harry Enfield's moustachioed cartoon icon of post-war propriety, would be impressed. No one else would be. I carry them like talismans. They seem to work. For less and less do I encounter those strange blue creatures that pass for Mercury pay phones.

So whatever happened to Mercury? Eleven years ago the company was apparently given a licence to print money when it was granted exclusive rights to challenge the monopoly of British Telecom. Yet in the decade that has passed it seems hardly to have dented the market. Last year it was forced to announce it is gradually to shut down the call boxes, lay off 2,500 staff and restructure the business at a cost of £122m. Then last week the man responsible for the new strategy, Duncan Lewis, abruptly resigned himself, with no job to go to.

Mercury is now on its fifth chief executive in six years. So is it an impossible job, or is it the chairman, Lord Young of Graffham - Margaret Thatcher's one-time favourite minister - just impossible to work with? Things were looking good for Mercury in 1990, when Lord Young took over as chairman of its parent company, Cable & Wireless. Not long before, as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, he had awarded a mobile telephony licence to Mercury. His appointment seemed to make sense for C&W, the telecom giant that was once the communications system of empire and which spans 50 countries.

Lord Young went with a can-do reputation. "Everyone else brings me problems, David

brings me solutions," Mrs Thatcher memorably said of the man she brought unelected into the Cabinet, ennobling him for the purpose, after being impressed with his performance as head of the Manpower Services Commission.

But not everyone was pleased. Gordon Owen, the chief executive, had hoped for the top job himself. Mr Owen, a capable old C&W hand who was autocratic, energetic and obstinate, began a power struggle that lasted 10 months. "He made no effort to work with the new chairman," one insider said. "The end was inevitable."

One day a friend walked into Mr Owen's office and announced that a headhunter had offered him Mr Owen's job. After 37 years at C&W he went to receive his dismissal with the words: "Right, you've taken my whole life, what's the deal?" The deal was almost £1m and this week, with Mercury in chaos, Mr Owen was maintaining a satisfied silence; he is chairman of the National Grid's telecom outfit, Energis, which is using electricity pylons to support fibre-optic wires to become the third big player in a rapidly expanding telecom market that now has almost 60 firms holding licences.

With Mr Owen gone, Lord Young became an executive chairman. He was hands-on about new business development and as an international

front-man but also "dabbling and dipping in and out elsewhere," in the words of one former senior C&W executive, "in a manner which people working for him find difficult". It was a pattern familiar to senior civil servants at the DTI who, in an unpublished survey, showed they didn't like him. Difficult, abrasive, bullying, shallow, slightly flashy, PR-driven were among the verdicts. Lord Young was shrinking their department but many outsiders shared the view. "Slack and strangely lack-

found one in James Ross, who came from BP as C&W chief executive - "a calm, straight guy who works for consensus," colleagues said. But he has found no one to stay at Mercury. His first chief executive there, Peter van Cuylenburg, decided that as BT got its act together Mercury was going to need a more specific strategy to compete. "It couldn't be a mini-BT across the board," one former C&W executive said. The man inevitably known as PVC immersed the company in a com-

pany for the company," a Young loyalist said. "But he appeared to be less effective on the admin and finance side. His budget caused a crisis of confidence." Mr Harris was moved sideways last year after disappointing results - profits went down by 17 per cent.

In came Duncan Lewis, an ex-BT man "very calm, assured, thinking everything through, putting in place a strategy," said one C&W old hand. The strategy was to wield the axe on payphones, jobs and an awful lot else and concentrate on corporate customers who prefer to deal with one telecom outfit for all their needs. Nine months on, the City began to talk about how he had "turned the company round with some hard decisions". Now, out of the blue, Mr Lewis goes too, to be replaced by Peter Howell-Davies, Cable & Wireless man and boy.

So is it an impossible job? Some analysts say yes. BT was left too dominant, they argue, pointing to its huge powers of information and the breadth of its customer base. And BT was allowed to depress prices where Mercury competed and raise them where it had a monopoly - something Mr Lewis was complaining about in an impassioned City speech the day before his summary resignation. But other analysts believe that Mercury has just lapsed out - under-estimating BT's economies of scale, over-esti-

Is chief executive of Mercury an impossible job, or is Lord Young just impossible to work with?

ing in presence," one said. "He may be the man with solutions, but they don't last," another said. "He has a short attention span," is the judgement of one who has worked closely with him. "He has big ideas but doesn't have the concentration to carry them through."

"It was reasonable enough to change Owen," says James Dodd, telecom analyst with Kleinwort Benson. "He and Lord Sharp, the former chairman, had done a good job but something new was needed to take the company into a new era. You wanted a blue-chip corporate manager," Lord Young

plete strategic rethink, and after just a year PVC went back to the States.

He was replaced by Mike Harris from First Direct, the bank that had made the most successful current application of modern telephony. "Young wanted someone to market Mercury aggressively," one insider said. Mr Harris was good at that but knew it was not enough. He too introduced a strategic rethink along the lines of "imagine what the company should be like in five years and imagine how we get from here to there". But costs began to rise. "Mike was good front-

matting its own return on investment and making a number of key errors. They point to its precipitate move to a coinless market in payphones and its policy of free off-peak calls in its mobile phone system. "Free calls in the evening," one analyst said, "secured them quick penetration of the market but people bought phones and only used them for free in the evening."

In the City people asked if the 63-year-old Lord Young was worth his total remuneration package of almost £1m a year. "Mercury was one of the most spectacular investments of the Eighties under Lord Sharp," says James Dodd at Kleinwort Benson. "But it has underperformed dramatically for the past two years. It doesn't reflect well on Lord Young. In the end, a chairman only has one job - to appoint a successful team - that's the only thing he has to do."

Much will turn on the outcome of Mercury's recent £825m investment in the German telecom company Vebacom. "It is an enormous gamble when the political and regulatory structure of the German market is undecided," another analyst said. "Mercury has gone critical." It is not the only key strategic decision to be made. One of Duncan Lewis's concerns was that C&W - on whose main board he was offered a place just before he left - is currently trying to do too much. A "federation" is how Lord Young likes to describe it: a "hotchpotch" is Mr Lewis's view.

"There is no doubt that C&W is a house divided," one international analyst said. "It is a schizophrenic organisation - a monopoly operator in many countries and yet the market entrant in others."



Big ideas, but ... Lord Young came with a 'can-do' reputation, though his hands-on approach grated on some

Brutal push that could discredit private finance for public projects

If there was one really serious grumble about the Government at the CBI conference this week it was the failure of the Private Finance Initiative to deliver the grand promises made for it by ministers.

The PFI, a centrepiece of Treasury policy that has the full backing of the Prime Minister, is meant to draw private money into projects that in the past have been funded directly by the taxpayer. But much of business now sees the whole idea as no more than a fig-leaf to cover the nakedness of the Government's commitment to spending on roads, railways, hospitals, education and prisons.

The consensus in Birmingham was that it was a good idea gone horribly wrong. The public spending cuts are going ahead, but the PFI is bogged down in bureaucracy and incapable of filling the gap.

Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, will promise yet another expansion of the PFI in the Budget but you do not have to be a wizard at arithmetic to see how easily this can camouflage pub-



INDUSTRY VIEW
PETER RODGERS

lic spending cuts, to pay for a tax giveaway. The Chancellor and Michael Jack, the minister responsible for the PFI, are aware enough of the risk of the PFI falling apart if nothing is done.

Possible new projects worth a total of £25bn have been identified. The message from the Treasury to departmental permanent secretaries during the public expenditure round has been to bring forward your PFI projects because that is the only way you will be allowed to meet your investment targets.

This method of implementing the PFI has proved brutal indeed, and it is said that careers will be broken by failure to deliver.

The campaign is at least in part a reaction to foot-dragging throughout Whitehall during the first 18 months of the PFI,

when the number of contracts let was embarrassingly tiny. This summer, the Prime Minister got stumpy about it, and insisted that the whole Cabinet - which had not been uniformly enthusiastic - came into line. That resulted in the boot being put into permanent secretaries and a sharp increase in the number of deals clinched.

Even now, only £1.3bn of the £5bn contracts the Chancellor said a year ago would be let by next March have actually been agreed. That £5bn figure includes the £2.3bn Channel tunnel rail link, which does appear to be grinding slowly towards an agreement, but probably because of a rapid increase in the bribe - sorry, contribution - from the public purse.

If the CBI attack were not enough, Sir Alastair Morton,

the leading propagandist for the PFI until this summer, stuck the knife in deeper this week by asking in a public lecture, "Where's the beef?" Sir Alastair, a co-chairman of Eurotunnel, was chairman until the summer of the Private Finance Panel, a body whose job is to steer and promote the initiative.

He likened the situation when he left the panel to a tube of toothpaste: "Pressure on the initiation end has produced a bulging of the tube followed by a spurt from time to time as some, but not enough, of the product came out." He blamed private industry and - with a particularly sharp tongue - Whitehall.

The basic requirement of a PFI contract is that it transfers financial risk from the public to the private sector, so that the outlay no longer counts as public spending. Overruns on conventional public sector works are invariably paid for by taxpayers. Under the PFI, the company is also the operator of the project once it is completed, a new and higher level of risk.

Sir Alastair believes that to cope with this the PFI requires far stronger, better capitalised bidders than the ad hoc consortia of construction and IT companies, consultants and medical or prison equipment firms at present involved. ICI, BP, Shell and other giants used to owning as well as managing big projects might make a much better list of PFI contracts, but sadly are not interested.

Sir Alastair's harshest complaint is reserved for the way the Government has been implementing the PFI. Civil servants,

he believes, have yet to come to terms with a cultural change that requires them to understand and price commercial risks, and oversee services to be provided by the private sector over as long as 25 years.

The Treasury claims that as well as the effort from the top to persuade departments to push the PFI forward, it has begun a drive to restrain civil servants at all levels in spending departments in the new disciplines. But the numbers of people are small and the pace so slow it is hard to believe -

given that the task is to change the working method of entire divisions of the civil service - that this will make a dramatic difference within the timescale of the public spending cuts.

A deeper problem may be the Treasury itself. An organisation whose role in life is saying yes or no to other people's spending plans is not best suited to a crash programme of instilling an entrepreneurial culture in the rest of Whitehall.

Worse still, some projects, such as the Channel tunnel rail link, are being squeezed into the

PFI when they are probably better suited to public sector investment.

It may be that a brutal push is needed to make anything happen fast in Whitehall. But in this case, the motive for haste seems to be to kick-start the PFI before the election, so the Government can take the credit for the hoped for new investment.

By building up expectations, for political reasons, of how fast the PFI can deliver work to companies, the Government is discrediting a worthwhile exercise before it is fully operational.

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BUSINESS BANKING CHARGES*					
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Standing Orders	48	55	58	70	18
Direct Debit	48	55	58	61	18
Charges Cashback	48	55	58	73	FREE
CREDITS					
Charges	79	55	58	81	FREE
Accelerated	12.5	19	18	17.5	FREE

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Legal Notices

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
CHANCERY DIVISION
COMPANIES COURT

IN THE MATTER OF PROVIDENT MUTUAL LIFE ASSURANCE ASSOCIATION
- and -
IN THE MATTER OF GENERAL ACCIDENT LINKED LIFE ASSURANCE LIMITED
- and -

IN THE MATTER OF THE INSURANCE COMPANIES ACT 1982
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a Petition (the "Petition") was on the 4th October, 1995 presented to Her Majesty's High Court of Justice by the above-named Provident Mutual Life Assurance Association ("Provident Mutual") for the sanction of the Court under Part I of Schedule 2C to the Insurance Companies Act 1982 (the "Act") to a Scheme (the "Scheme") providing for the transfer to General Accident Linked Life Assurance Limited ("GA Linked Life") of the whole of the long term business (as defined by Section 1(1) of the said Act) of Provident Mutual and for orders making ancillary provisions in connection with the said transfer under paragraph 5 of Schedule 2C to the Act.

Copies of the said Petition (containing the Scheme) and a Report by an Independent Actuary pursuant to paragraph 2 of Schedule 2C to the Act may be inspected at each of the offices specified in the Schedule hereto during normal business hours for a period of 21 days from the date of publication of this notice.

The Petition is directed to be heard before the Judge at the Royal Courts of Justice, Strand, London WC2A 2LL on the 20th December, 1995. Any person (including any employee of Provident Mutual or GA Linked Life) who claims that he or she would be adversely affected by the Scheme may appear at the time of the said hearing to person or by Counsel. Any person who intends to so appear, and any policyholder of Provident Mutual or GA Linked Life who differs from the Scheme but does not intend to so appear, should give not less than two clear days' prior notice in writing of such intention or dissent and of the reasons therefor to the Solicitors named below.

Copies of the documents referred to above will be furnished by such Solicitors to any person requiring them prior to the making of an Order sanctioning the Scheme on prior payment of £17.40 (being a charge of 10p for each page).

Dated this 16th November, 1995
HERBERT SMITH, Exchange House, Primrose Street, London EC2A 2HS. Ref: 146/350 Solicitors for Provident Mutual

THE SCHEDULE
Offices of Provident Mutual
HEAD OFFICE: Six Hills Way, Sevenoaks, Kent TN11 9JL
REGISTERED OFFICE: 25-31 Moorgate, London EC2R 6BA
BIRMINGHAM: Solihull House, 17-25 College Square, East Belford BT1 6DE
BRIGHTON: Lyndene House, Hagley Road, Birmingham B16 8PE
BRISTOL: Suite 3, 3rd Floor, Clavdon, 190 Corporation Street, Birmingham B4 6QD
CROYDON: 36 Frederick Place, Brighton BN1 4AE
GLASGOW: 1-4 Portland Square, Bristol BS2 8PR
HARROW: Creston International Business Centre, Temple Way, Bristol B1 6EZ
LEEDS: Langdon House, 17 Langdon Road, Croydon CR0 2BX
LONDON: Unit 1, Buchanan Court, Buchanan Business Park, Camberland Road, Sepp, Glasgow G33 6HX
LONDON: 93 West George Street, Glasgow G2 1PB
LONDON: 1-3 Tyburn Lane, Harrow HA1 3AF
LONDON: Joseph's Well, Harrow Walk, Park Lane, Leeds LS3 1AB
LONDON: 30 Park Lane, Leeds LS1 2SP
MANCHESTER: Suite 16, Manchester International Office Centre, Spyl Road, Wythenshawe, Manchester M22 5WB
NEWCASTLE: Suite House, 83-85 Mosley Street, Manchester M2 3LG
NORTHAMPTON: 2nd Floor, Kelburn House, 7-19 Mosley Street, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne NE1 1VE
NORWICH: 29 St. Katherine's Street, Northampton NN1 2QZ
NOTTINGHAM: Westgate House, 14-18 Westgate, Norwich NR1 3LA
READING: 4-8 Regent Street, Nottingham NG1 5BQ
ROMFORD: St. Giles House, 25 King's Road, Reading RG1 3AR
SITTINGBOURNE: York House, 50 Western Road, Romford RM1 3LP
SOUTHAMPTON: 3-9 Station Street, Sittingbourne ME10 3DU
STEVENAGE: Grosvenor House, Cumberland Place, Southampton SO1 2BD
YORK: Crosswell House, 142 High Street, Stevenage, Herts SG1 3DB
YORK: 2 Rougher Street, York YO1 1HR
CARDIFF: Pithaville, Penrhyn, Soudham P22 0NH
SWANSEA: General Buildings, 31-33 Newport Road, Cardiff CF2 1TQ
SWANSEA: General Buildings, 163 St. Helen's Road, Swansea SA1 4JD

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Foreign Exchange Rates

STERLING				DOLLAR				D-MARK	
Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	Spot	1 month	3 months	Spot		
US	1563	10-1	32-30	1000				10705	
Canada	2187	5-7	21-4	25-43	14-9			10500	
France	2335	35-45	39-140	14025	21-9	38-00		10000	
Italy	73817	45-22	330-70	45586	9-17	30-45		34472	
Japan	242.5	35-40	203-220	18032	54-71	125-134		72322	
Germany	5508	35-44	228-262	12222	50-48	143-140		14142	
ECU	1239	15-7	34-27	12990	3-5	10-12		15482	
Belgium	4503	24-9	33-27	25000	46-35	130-130		20597	
Denmark	4508	32-31	250-264	54925	20-5	50-10		10594	
Netherlands	2474	310-320	1820-1820	12000	28-25	80-75		1203	
Ireland	5974	5-7	22-20	10202	0-3	0-4		10428	
Norway	55725	55-58	381-394	62055	50-25	125-75		155565	
Sweden	8032	19-25	32-73	12105	36-40	111-19		155565	
Switzerland	17780	14-38	194-185	1242	37-35	39-35		10088	
Australia	21047	7-9	28-51	13523	7-9	10-10		10694	
Hong Kong	9307	19-15	107-102	17945	5-18	30-45		15424	
Malaysia	33447	0-4	0-4	23327	0-7	10-17		17659	
New Zealand	24038	55-57	344-354	12544	40-42	42-42		23609	
Saudi Arabia	33589	0-4	0-4	150500				10025	
Singapore	2391	0-4	0-4	14939	37-32	100-95			

OTHER SPOT RATES				
Country	Spot	Country	Spot	
Argentina	15562	03889	Nigeria	18155
Brazil	54564	03887	Pakistan	332872
India	14567	03857	Philippines	43837
China	25245	43185	Portugal	228343
Colombia	52268	43185	Spain	56564
France	4508	43185	Sweden	78104
Germany	2474	43185	Switzerland	17780
Greece	35522	28350	Taiwan	58788
Italy	73817	34780	Tel Aviv	42422
Japan	242.5	02000	UAE	57-28
Korea	44567			

New Forward rates quoted high to low are at a discount (quoted low spot rates); those quoted low to high are at a premium (high to spot rates). Dollar rates quoted as responses. For the latest foreign exchange rates call 0800 120 3203. Cable cost 20p per minute (weekend rate after office hours).

100 Largest Insurance Funds

Stock	3rd	Mid	Other	Stock	3rd	Mid	Other
Abney Life Managed \$1	7554	1247	London Life Schroders \$2	463	584	437	
Abney Nations Managed \$1	1229	1247	London Life \$1	494	584	437	
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A close-up photograph of a telephone booth directory sign. The sign is partially visible, showing the words "BOOTH", "COUNTRY", and "FIELD". To the right of these words are two columns of numbers: "101-201" and "102-202". Above the numbers, there is a small sign that reads "BUSINESS SERVICE" and "971-168-168".

Another episode of Morley Street

Retirement is often not what it seems to be. Pensioners who have been looking forward to empty days find that there are only so many pottering laps of the garden you can do, a limited number of times you can read J.R. Hartley's tome on fly-fishing.

This happens to thoroughbred trainers from the front line as well and one of racing's more convincing adages is that old horses do not die, they stand in a field and get thoroughly braced off.

One such animal with medals right across his chest climbs back into the trenches today. Morley Street, the 1991 Champion Hurdler, returns at Ascot following 432 days of increasingly annoying inactivity.

"Like so many who have been retired he began to show that he actually enjoyed being in training after being taken out of it," Toby Balding, the gelding's trainer, said yesterday.

"He was getting very above himself away from the yard. He was very well and he was sparking and showing that he wanted to get on and do some work. He was in such good nick but there was nothing for him to do so it seemed a shame not to bring him back."

Home for Morley Street since September last year has been in Essex with his owner, Michael Jackson, who had tired of seeing his old soldier become a counterfiet of the

Richard Edmondson on the former champion returning from retirement

brilliant performer he once was. After the Corsa Siepi di Merano (Italian Champion Hurdle) 14 months ago, when Morley Street was a creditable fourth, Jackson rolled the credits. "Michael said then he was not enjoying not seeing his horse win if you like and we took the decision to lay him off, to retire him," Balding said.

Those behind Morley Street have always felt protective about the horse as he has been prone to breaking blood vessels.

RICHARD EDMONDSON
NAP: Take The Bucksin (Aintree 1.15)
NB: Hfence (Sedgefield 2.30)

Balding has treated the chestnut with Lasix and natural positions that have included just about everything but the recipe from the Macbeth witches' cookery book. "We've had him under review for a long time in view of the problems he's had throughout his career," the trainer said. He gives so much you don't want to overface him."

Thus Morley Street, at the age of 11, arrives in Berkshire today for combat with Oh So Risky, who goes chasing after this afternoon's Coopers & Ly-

brand Ascot Hurdle, Large Action and Call My Guest, whom he meets at level weights. By an inversion of what has gone before the old man also meets horses who will give him weight, namely Alours and Putty Road, the winner of the Sun Alliance Novice Hurdle at last season's Cheltenham Festival.

"We're not going to Ascot thinking we've got the Morley Street of three years ago," Balding said, "we're taking in a race where the conditions are to his advantage and if he runs a race of note we'll talk about the future. If not he'll just have the odd run for all of our, and his, enjoyment."

"As we talk, I certainly don't envisage him being a Champion Hurdler or anything. If he was to have an objective it would be the Martell Hurdle (at Aintree) again, but that would greatly depend on him confirming the good form he is showing at home."

Morley Street has already won the Liverpool race four times but if he fails to stem the tide of years on Merseyside next spring he will certainly not be booted back into Balding's stable. "He's a tremendous work leader and a lovely horse to have in the yard," the trainer said. "Everyone loves having him around again."



Morley Street 'getting above himself and sparking'

Photograph: Trevor Jones

Klairon holds back from Viking attack No dope found in Trigger

Klairon Davis had much the better of the argument with Merry Gale in the contest between two of Ireland's top chasers at Tipperary yesterday.

The winner, who had taken last season's Arke Trophy at the Cheltenham Festival, had the two-mile trip and the good ground in his favour and picked off Merry Gale (11-8) when Jim Dwyer's Aintree winner made a mistake two out when being reeled in by the 9-10 favourite.

"Klairon Davis did that well, but he will be having a light programme because there are not

many suitable races over this trip in this country. Next spring will be time enough to take on Viking Flagship," Arthur Moore, his trainer, said.

Richard Dunwoody, on the runner-up, reported: "Merry Gale did his job well, but he missed the second last then slipped taking off at the last."

Dwyer described the race as a means to an end. "Merry Gale needed that and goes now to Punchestown on Saturday week before running either at Leopardstown or in the King George at Christmas."

The official analysis of samples taken from the Melbourne Cup flop Double Trigger have found no prohibited substances in the favourite's system.

"They've said he is clear and I am quite happy," Mark Johnston, the four-year-old's trainer, said after arriving back in Middleham yesterday from Australia.

An irregularity had been reported in Double Trigger's pre-race blood test - which almost prevented his taking part - and it was also shown in the post-race urine sample. But it was found to be caused by a metabolite of a substance which is a naturally occurring constituent of some feedstuffs and was subsequently found in analysis of the feed given to Double Trigger before the race.

Johnston said: "It is still a mystery why he ran like he did [17th of 20] and we will have to sit down and have a bit of a think about it."

Riders lose appeal

The five jump jockeys who had appealed against seven-day bans for taking the wrong course at Taunton last week had their plea turned down yesterday.

The riders - Tony McCoy, Guy Lewis, Tom Scudamore, Mark Richards and Mick Fitzgerald - had their deposits of £240 returned.

Fitzgerald, who will miss the ride on Rough Quest in the Hennessy, defended his actions. "If you were in behind the leaders, as I was on Rainbow Walk, you could not see the arrows which were pointing to the right route," he said. "In future I will pull if I'm not sure - and where will that get me?"

ASCOT
2.40: LARGE ACTION is back to the obstacles he likes after a somewhat stuttering closing debut at Uxeter earlier this month and with the conditions firmly in his favour should vindicate his trainer's decision to aim for the Champion Hurdle. Alours and Putty Road are no pushovers but have to concede weight to Large Action and Oh So Risky and this should prove beyond them. Oh So Risky may lack the fitness to upset the odds.
3.10: Wonder Man showed the

HYPERION
with the Stb he receives. Martin's L-maid form of the highest quality last season, running Morrell and Dandling Paddy close at Aintree when returning from injury.
3.40: Reg Akhurst is such a master of placing his horses in handicaps that it would probably be unwise to look further than SILVER GROOM here. This useful Flat performer beat Mister Drum at Sandown a fortnight ago despite making a mistake at the last. He should improve enough to see off Golden Arrow and Thinking Time.

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AINTREE

HYPERION
1.15 Take The Bucksin 1.50 Frontier Flight
2.20 Clay County 2.50 Jaws 3.20 Spanish Light 3.50 Raehaels Dawn

GOING: Grand National course - Good to Firm; Military course - Good to Firm; Hurdle course - Good to Firm.
■ Two left-hand courses. Grand National circuit is 2 1/2 miles and several with a steep drop on the landing side. Military course 1 1/2 miles round, conventional fences.
■ Racecourse is NE of city, one mile from the M57 on the A69. Aintree railway station (served by Liverpool, Line 8) adjoins the course. ADMIRALTY: County Stand 514; Tottenham 57; Cranston 166 (free both ends); CAE PARK: County Stand 55 (advance booking only); Western 52; Central free.

WINNERS IN THE LAST SEVEN DAYS: None.
LONG-DISTANCE RUNNERS: Brummen (1.15) & Explorer Mondial (1.50) have been sent 246 miles by T. Dyer from Invergowrie, Tayside.

1.15 LETHS EVENTS NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS D) £4,000 added 3m 110yds
1. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
3. 23-224 THE BUCKSIN (14) (7) J. O'Connor 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
4. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)

1.50 EATONS CATERING CONDITIONAL JOCKEYS NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS F) £3,500 added 2m 110yds
1. 21-221 FRONTIER FLIGHT (9) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
3. 23-224 THE BUCKSIN (14) (7) J. O'Connor 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
4. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)

2.20 LETHS & PARKETT HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS B) £3,000 added 2m 110yds

1. 31-224 GLAY COUNTY (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 21-221 FRONTIER FLIGHT (9) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
3. 13-133 POPS MINNIE (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)

2.50 COMPASS GROUP HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS C) £3,000 added 3m 110yds
1. 12-114 JAWAN (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 12-114 JAWAN (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
3. 12-114 JAWAN (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)

3.20 BAYMAN CATERING NOVICE CHASE (CLASS D) £3,000 added 3m 110yds
1. 14-114 SPANISH LIGHT (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 14-114 SPANISH LIGHT (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
3. 14-114 SPANISH LIGHT (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)

3.50 CHARTWELLS MARES INTERMEDIATE NH FLAT RACE (CLASS H) £2,500 added 2m 110yds
1. 31-224 GLAY COUNTY (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 21-221 FRONTIER FLIGHT (9) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
3. 13-133 POPS MINNIE (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)

12.20 TEMPERING 12.50 STAGS FELL 1.25 SHAGGAM 2.00 BOLLIN WILLIAM 2.30

GOING: Good.
■ Left-hand, undulating course. Easy fences and long run-in on chase course of 50yds.
■ Course is in SW of town near junction of A69 and A177. Races from Stockton station (1st or Durham station 12m). ADMIRALTY: County Stand 514; Tottenham 57; Cranston 166 (free both ends); CAE PARK: County Stand 55 (advance booking only); Western 52; Central free.

12.20 TEMPERING 12.50 STAGS FELL 1.25 SHAGGAM 2.00 BOLLIN WILLIAM 2.30
1. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 21-221 FRONTIER FLIGHT (9) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
3. 13-133 POPS MINNIE (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)

1.25 SHAGGAM 2.00 BOLLIN WILLIAM 2.30
1. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 21-221 FRONTIER FLIGHT (9) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
3. 13-133 POPS MINNIE (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)

2.00 BOLLIN WILLIAM 2.30
1. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 21-221 FRONTIER FLIGHT (9) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
3. 13-133 POPS MINNIE (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)

SEDGEFIELD

HYPERION
12.20 Tempering 12.50 Stags Fell 1.25 Shaggam 2.00 Bollin William 2.30

GOING: Good.
■ Left-hand, undulating course. Easy fences and long run-in on chase course of 50yds.
■ Course is in SW of town near junction of A69 and A177. Races from Stockton station (1st or Durham station 12m). ADMIRALTY: County Stand 514; Tottenham 57; Cranston 166 (free both ends); CAE PARK: County Stand 55 (advance booking only); Western 52; Central free.

12.20 TEMPERING 12.50 STAGS FELL 1.25 SHAGGAM 2.00 BOLLIN WILLIAM 2.30
1. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 21-221 FRONTIER FLIGHT (9) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
3. 13-133 POPS MINNIE (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)

1.25 SHAGGAM 2.00 BOLLIN WILLIAM 2.30
1. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 21-221 FRONTIER FLIGHT (9) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
3. 13-133 POPS MINNIE (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)

2.00 BOLLIN WILLIAM 2.30
1. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 21-221 FRONTIER FLIGHT (9) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
3. 13-133 POPS MINNIE (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)

2.30 BOLLIN WILLIAM 2.30
1. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 21-221 FRONTIER FLIGHT (9) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
3. 13-133 POPS MINNIE (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)

2.30 BOLLIN WILLIAM 2.30
1. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 21-221 FRONTIER FLIGHT (9) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
3. 13-133 POPS MINNIE (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)

2.30 BOLLIN WILLIAM 2.30
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1. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
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1. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 21-221 FRONTIER FLIGHT (9) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
3. 13-133 POPS MINNIE (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)

2.00 W A STEPHENSON MEMORIAL NOVICE CHASE (CLASS D) £3,000 added 2m 5f

1. 21-221 FRONTIER FLIGHT (9) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
3. 13-133 POPS MINNIE (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)

2.30 COLIN MACDONALD HANDICAP CHASE (AMATEUR RIDERS) (CLASS F) £3,500 3m 3f
1. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 21-221 FRONTIER FLIGHT (9) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
3. 13-133 POPS MINNIE (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)

3.00 HAREPOINT CLAIMING HURDLE (CLASS F) £2,500 added 3m 3f 110yds
1. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 21-221 FRONTIER FLIGHT (9) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
3. 13-133 POPS MINNIE (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)

3.30 SEDGEFIELD BOOKMAKERS HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS E) £3,000 added 2m 110yds
1. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 21-221 FRONTIER FLIGHT (9) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
3. 13-133 POPS MINNIE (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)

3.50 SHEPHERD INSULATION HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS F) £4,000 added 2m 110yds
1. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 21-221 FRONTIER FLIGHT (9) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
3. 13-133 POPS MINNIE (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)

4.00 SHEPHERD INSULATION HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS F) £4,000 added 2m 110yds
1. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 21-221 FRONTIER FLIGHT (9) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
3. 13-133 POPS MINNIE (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)

4.30 SHEPHERD INSULATION HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS F) £4,000 added 2m 110yds
1. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 21-221 FRONTIER FLIGHT (9) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
3. 13-133 POPS MINNIE (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)

4.30 SHEPHERD INSULATION HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS F) £4,000 added 2m 110yds
1. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 21-221 FRONTIER FLIGHT (9) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
3. 13-133 POPS MINNIE (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)

4.30 SHEPHERD INSULATION HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS F) £4,000 added 2m 110yds
1. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 21-221 FRONTIER FLIGHT (9) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
3. 13-133 POPS MINNIE (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)

4.30 SHEPHERD INSULATION HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS F) £4,000 added 2m 110yds
1. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 21-221 FRONTIER FLIGHT (9) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
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2. 21-221 FRONTIER FLIGHT (9) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
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4.30 SHEPHERD INSULATION HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS F) £4,000 added 2m 110yds
1. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 21-221 FRONTIER FLIGHT (9) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
3. 13-133 POPS MINNIE (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)

4.30 SHEPHERD INSULATION HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS F) £4,000 added 2m 110yds
1. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 21-221 FRONTIER FLIGHT (9) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
3. 13-133 POPS MINNIE (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)

2.00 W A STEPHENSON MEMORIAL NOVICE CHASE (CLASS D) £3,000 added 2m 5f

1. 21-221 FRONTIER FLIGHT (9) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
3. 13-133 POPS MINNIE (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)

2.30 COLIN MACDONALD HANDICAP CHASE (AMATEUR RIDERS) (CLASS F) £3,500 3m 3f
1. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 21-221 FRONTIER FLIGHT (9) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
3. 13-133 POPS MINNIE (14) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)

3.00 HAREPOINT CLAIMING HURDLE (CLASS F) £2,500 added 3m 3f 110yds
1. 02-512 NALANDA (USA) (7) M. J. Doyle 4.11.5 - J. O'Connor (7)
2. 21-221 FRONTIER FLIGHT (9) M. J

sport

England signal the end of hoof and chase

Glenn Moore on a promising display by Terry Venables' patient performers

Roy Hodgson was generous in defeat. "If English football is as bad as all the inquests keep saying it is, it must be a remarkable performance by the coaching staff to get the national team playing like that." So said the Switzerland manager after his team had lost 3-1 to England at Wembley on Wednesday.

Hodgson meant that the English game was not that bad after all. Maybe not, but his comments are more accurate when taken at face value. English club results in Europe have been so consistently poor that there clearly is a lot wrong with their game.

It is partly due to technique, but it is also a question of knowledge and approach. The "remarkable achievement" of Terry Venables and his staff is that they have coached England players not to play the way they do at club level.

The message is getting through. Before Wednesday's match Tony Adams and David Platt both talked of the need for patience; during the game most of the team showed it. Teddy Sheringham's goal followed at least 15 passes involving every outfield player except Alan Shearer and Adams. Stuart Pearce and Paul Gascoigne were each involved three or more times as England patiently probed for an opening on the left while getting forward in numbers. They then switched the play and attacked from the right.

"I was pleased that, when we could not go forward, we did not try and force it and lose the ball," Venables said. "We brought the ball back out, moved them around and made space to get quality balls forward. We changed the play well."

Other chance-creating moves were similarly prolonged. At last the hoof-and-chase "direct-play" philosophy as espoused by Charles Hughes is being expunged from official policy (even if Hughes is still the FA's director of coaching and education).

To be fair to Hughes his philosophy may have worked 20 years ago, but defences are better organised now, teams defend deeper and in greater numbers and patience and cunning is usually required to break them down. There is, however, still a case for direct football of a different type - as Steve Stone showed with his aggressive running and preparedness

cross the ball. "He was first class," Venables said. "He looks like he has been there for years, he did so when he first came into the squad. He is a fighter, too, which is useful to have when things are not going well."

Stone's success contrasted with Steve McManaman's ineffectiveness. Tying him to a fixed role on the left, as appeared to happen, dramatically reduces his potency. He is too one-footed to go by defenders on the left wing with any consistency. Yet giving him a free role would affect England's defensive discipline and shape.

Unfortunately there are no obvious alternatives - the only English-born left-footed winger of international class is Ryan Giggs. Darren Anderton, is one possibility, if he can regain fitness in time, for his game offers more than McManaman's.

"Can Anderton play on the left?" Venables was asked. "He can do so many things. He can play in a free role, in the centre, on the right or left. He has two good feet. He and Stone could play in the same team."

Between the wide players it is worth persevering with Jamie Redknapp and Paul Gascoigne. The only reservation is Gascoigne's lack of tactical discipline. Venables noted: "At 2-1 up he left his position too often and isolated Robert [Lee]. I wanted him to boss the midfield and rely on the front four to get the third goal but he was up the left wing and... I don't know." Gascoigne, as ever, can still perplex and infuriate even the most understanding of managers.

The hard-working Lee covered well for him on Wednesday, better than Redknapp would. However, Redknapp has a better touch and vision while Lee looks more of a squad player than a first-choice international.

Further forward, Sheringham's thoughtful performance causes as many problems as it solves. Peter Beardsley has more nous, Nick Barmby more pace and energy, yet Shearer seems happier with Sheringham than either. He is certainly happier playing in a partnership.

England next play Portugal, on 12 December. Venables has just one day - a Tuesday - to prepare for the match. It may not be long enough to switch from playing Premiership rush, to international patience.



Ball winner: Alan Shearer appears happier with Sheringham sharing the striking role for England

Photograph: David Ashdown

Hair loss proving England's gain

Those who were surprised at Steve Stone's sudden and accomplished success in the England team clearly have less of a grasp of footballing heritage than Terry Venables. Stone's arrival marked a return to a tradition apparently lost under the managership of Graham Taylor: the crucial role to be played in the national set-up by the midfield slap-head.

Football history is littered with the feats of the prematurely hair-free. Some, like Ralph Coates, Terry Hennessey, David Armstrong and the daddy of them all, Bobby Charlton, cheered the nation's heart both with their efforts on the field, and

the manner in which they fought so valiantly against the reality of hair loss. Coates, for instance, is remembered for the extraordinary manner in which he left not only full-backs trailing in his wake, but also a bloom of hair which he had earlier scraped over the top of his dome from more hirsute parts of his body in the unlikely hope we would all believe it grew out of his scalp, rather than his arm-pit.

Not that you can blame players like Coates for trying to disguise their problem. Even in these days when the fashion is for a number one crop, it is no easy life being a footballer bereft of barnet. Stone, re-

member, is the same age as Jamie Redknapp, but it seems unlikely the acreage of his bare bonce adorns as many teenage bedroom walls as Redknapp's trendy teased locks. At every stadium he plays, the cries of derision will echo in his ears. That includes the City Ground. Even when fans attempt to cheer on the tonsorially challenged player on their own team, they can't help pointing

out his handicap ("Stevie Bould, Stevie Bould," chant Arsenal fans, "he ain't got no hair, but we don't care.")

Thus to succeed against these odds, the youthful baldie will develop nerves of steel and the determination of a soldier ant. The fear involved in stepping out at Wembley for the first time will be as nothing to the suffering endured when being called "Butt-tock-head" during a League encounter with Middlesbrough. This extra edge developed by no-hairs has been recognised by other national teams. The Italians, for instance, have Lombardo, a role model for the thinning everywhere. And arguably the best midfielder in the

last World Cup was Letchkov of Bulgaria, a man who claimed his hair loss was precipitated by fallout from Chernobyl.

As yet Stone has not blamed Druridge Bay power station, just up the coast from his Gateshead birthplace, for his premature follicle damage, but nonetheless, after Wednesday his future in an England shirt looks assured. And if Terry Venables takes the hint, matches him in midfield with Draper of Aston Villa and persuades Gazza to stick his head in a basin-full of Immac, the European Championship is as good as England's.

Another force rises on Tyneside

Non-League notebook
RUPERT METCALF

The Premiership leaders, Newcastle United, are not the only footballing success story on Tyneside this season. On the south side of the river, Gateshead are enjoying their best campaign for years, and could claim second place in the GM Vauxhall Conference if they beat Kettering at the International Stadium tomorrow.

The successors to the club of the same name who lost their place in the Football League in 1960, Gateshead have a realistic chance of promotion to the Third Division. The facilities at their home ground, which is more famous for hosting high-profile athletics events, ensure they would not suffer the same fate as Kidderminster and Macclesfield, both denied access to the Endleigh League because of problems with their grounds.

The man behind their rise is Colin Richardson, who took charge at Gateshead two years ago. He won 25 trophies at his five previous clubs - Ferryhill, Whickham, Newcastle, Bine Star, North Shields and Bridlington Town - and he is still hungry for more.

Richardson firmly believes his side can win the Conference this season. "That's what we're all in it for," he said last night, as he looked forward to extending his team's run of six wins in their last seven matches. "We're scoring goals now and not giving them away. We've changed a few things for the better."

Unlike some of their rivals in the Conference, who have paid out sizeable fees to strengthen their squads, Gateshead have signed their five recruits this term on free transfers: strikers Dean Trotter from Northampton, Paul Thompson from Hartlepool and Sam Kitchen from Doncaster, plus midfielder Derek Ord from Grimsby and goalkeeper Sean Musgrave from Sunderland. Richardson is so confident in his squad's ability that he has allowed the club's top scorer for the past two seasons, Paul Dobson, to move on to Bishop Auckland for a four-figure fee.

Chris holding CD case up.
...ACTUALLY, CAN YOU GET ME THIS ON VINYL. HAVE WE GOT THIS ON VINYL? Yeah there's one in the box Jamie fetches Vanessa Paradis 7-inch...but I don't think the turntable is working, Chris. DON'T WORRY. RECORD PLEASE... puts record on turntable and needle on record But the turntable's bust...I DON'T WANT TO PLAY IT, I'M JUST GOING TO SMASH IT FOR THE FRENCH PROTEST.

The Breakfast Show
DJ: Chris Evans
Time: 6:30 - 9am
Mondays - Fridays
Frequency 97 - 99FM



Win a Ski holiday to Keystone, Colorado with the INDEPENDENT

Plus K2 skis and snowboards to be won

If you fancy danger and excitement then let us introduce you to the ultimate adrenalin kick - extreme skiing. To celebrate the release of Warren Miller's new ski film - *Endless Winter* (presented by Labatt's Blue) which offers spectacular ski and snowboard footage, we've teamed up with Black Diamond Films to bring you your own taste of extreme skiing.

We are offering readers of the *Independent* the chance to start the ski season in style with our Extreme Ski prize draw. Our exclusive first prize is a seven day holiday for two in the majestic mountains of Colorado, USA. You'll be staying in the top ski resort of Keystone which offers world-class accommodation, plus the superb experience of night skiing. Not only that, but with your interchangeable lift ticket you'll be able to take to the slopes of Keystone, Breckenridge and Arapahoe Basin.

Spoilt for choice, you'll be able to ski and snowboard through champagne powder snow glistening beneath deep blue Colorado skies.

For our next six winners, we have a fabulous range of K2 skis and snowboards to choose from. The four ski models available are the FX 11.2 from the Adrenalin series; MSL10.0 from the Attack series; 5500 CS from the Unlimited series and the 5500 NS from the ladies Unlimited series. If you'd like to try your hand at snowboarding, then you could be surfing on K2's Dart Freestyle snowboard or the Eldorado 164 Extreme and Freeriding snowboard.

Twenty-four readers will receive a pair of Vail Regulator Goggles from Smith, the number one brand in the UK. These goggles feature an advanced anti-fog system, perfect for the serious skier. Fifty readers will receive a 'Turtle Fur' neck warmer, great for mountain tops and bus stops!

Also available are three hundred copies of Warren Miller's video *Born to Ski*. Destined to take your breath away, it features extreme skiing at its best. Another seven winners will each receive a case of Labatt's Blue Beer.

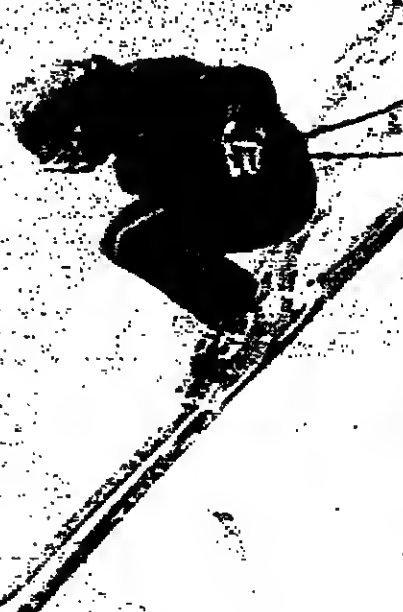
How to enter:

To enter our prize draw you must collect five differently numbered tokens from the seven we are publishing this week in the *Independent* on Sunday and the *Independent* on Saturday. One token must come from the *Independent* on Sunday. Today we print token 6, we will print an entry form on Saturday.

Rules are as previously published

The first five readers to call this telephone number today (10am - 7pm), 0371 240 4071, quoting *Independent Extreme Ski Cinema Tour Offer*, will each receive a free pair of tickets for the 8.30pm performance of *Endless Winter* on Saturday 18 November at the Prince Charles Cinema, Leicester Square, London. For further information on your nearest venue call the ticket hotline number above. Tickets are available for £4.99 in advance or £5.99 on the door.

For information on new low airfare packages (from £235) to Keystone and Breckenridge in Colorado, call 0800 891772.



Labatt's
Blue



K2

SMITH

In search
beautiful

Final qualifying

Charlton's

Early buyers

In search of the beautiful game

In a recent edition of the BBC's documentary series on European football, *Football, Fussball, Voetbal*, Hugh McIlvanney recalled a fellow Scottish journalist's comment after Real Madrid had beaten Eintracht Frankfurt 7-3 at Hampden Park in 1960. "It's all very well, but would our punters stand for that every week?" McIlvanney was asked. "They have just stood around for an hour, stunned with admiration," McIlvanney replied. "Would they stand for it? They would like the chance."

Modern defensive techniques and attitudes mean the 1996 European Championship is unlikely to bring us anything to equal that match, but it could give the British game the confidence to reappraise its approach. Tony Adams said this week that the public needed to be educated to expect a more patient game. As the wide interest in the BBC series and Channel 4's coverage of Italian football has illustrated, they may be ready to learn.

Thoughts are increasingly turning to Euro 96 following the conclusion on Wednesday of the qualifying competition (although

Is the time right for British football to alter its approach? asks Glenn Moore

the last of the 16 places will not be decided until next month's play-off between the Republic of Ireland and the Netherlands).

The last time England staged a major tournament, in 1966, Pele was kicked out of the tournament, several matches were disrupted by malicious and violent play, and the winners were a side who owed as much to Nobby Stiles as Bobby Charlton. The consequence was two decades of stagnation within the English game. This time, there is hope of better things.

Since the last World Cup there has been a move towards brighter football, led by the likes of Ajax and encouraged by stricter referees. More than half of next summer's teams have caught this mood - Croatia, France, Romania and Portugal are all enterprising sides while Russia, Bulgaria, Germany, Italy and England have similar potential.

With a record 16 countries involved, the 10th European Championship does not have an exclusive guest list, but it is an impressive one. If the Netherlands overcome Ireland in Liverpool to qualify next month, all previous eight winners will be at Euro 96, the first time this has happened since 1964, when there was only one previous winner. Only Sweden and Belgium are missing of Europe's better sides. Neither are among the elite.

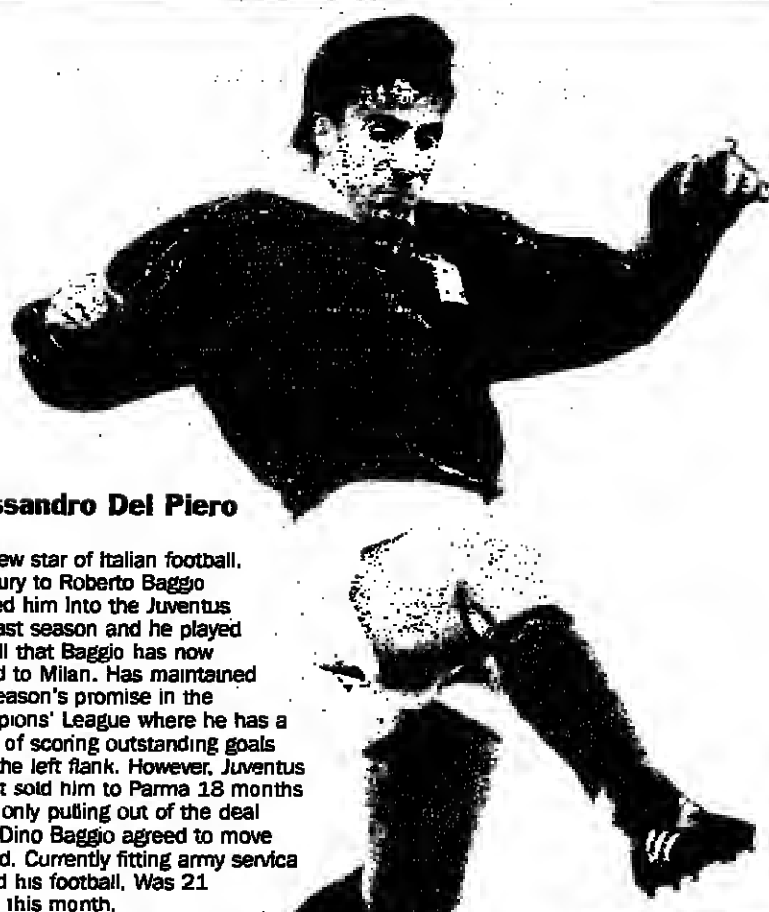
The strength and depth of the qualifiers means much hinges on next month's draw. Depending on how seeding is arranged, it would be quite possible for England to have Croatia, Bulgaria and the Netherlands in their group. It would be a pleasure to watch, but a nightmare to qualify from. Ireland, if they qualify, and Scotland could have it even worse, as neither are likely to succeed.

By the semi-finals, the tournament should have developed a momentum of its own, but at least one of the home teams, ideally the hosts, needs to reach the last eight to sustain interest. England are the most likely, but their possible progress does evoke mixed feelings.

Player development in the English game needs a dramatic restructuring, ideally one undertaken by the new technical director, which would encompass all levels of the game from primary school to Premiership. Absent failure next summer would, at least, ensure this need is recognised. But it could also lead to apathy.

A measure of success, on the other hand, would create a surge in enthusiasm which, if skillfully directed, could pay massive long-term dividends. The danger is that self-interested parties could use success to argue that the system works as it is, which is patently untrue. These thoughts will be echoed in Scotland, so let England and Scotland hope for success, but if it comes, not let it blind them to their faults.

Five to light up the summer



Alessandro Del Piero (Italy)

The new star of Italian football. An injury to Roberto Baggio allowed him into the Juventus side last season and he played so well that Baggio has now moved to Milan. Has maintained last season's promise in the Champions' League where he has a knack of scoring outstanding goals from the left flank. However, Juventus almost sold him to Parma 18 months ago - only pulling out of the deal when Dino Baggio agreed to move instead. Currently fitting army service around his football. Was 21 earlier this month.

Rui Costa (Portugal)

A playmaking midfielder and one of the main reasons why Gabriel Baptista scored a club-record 26 goals for Fiorentina last season. Just 22 when he was transferred 18 months ago from Benfica to the Italian club for £5m. Former member of Portugal's World Youth Cup champions. A busy playmaker who likes to get in the "hole" he has been compared to Fiorentina's favourite No 10 Giancarlo Antognoni - even by Antognoni himself. Now 23, he is slowly adding goalscoring to his talents. Quiet off the pitch, mature and committed on it.

Davor Suker (Croatia)

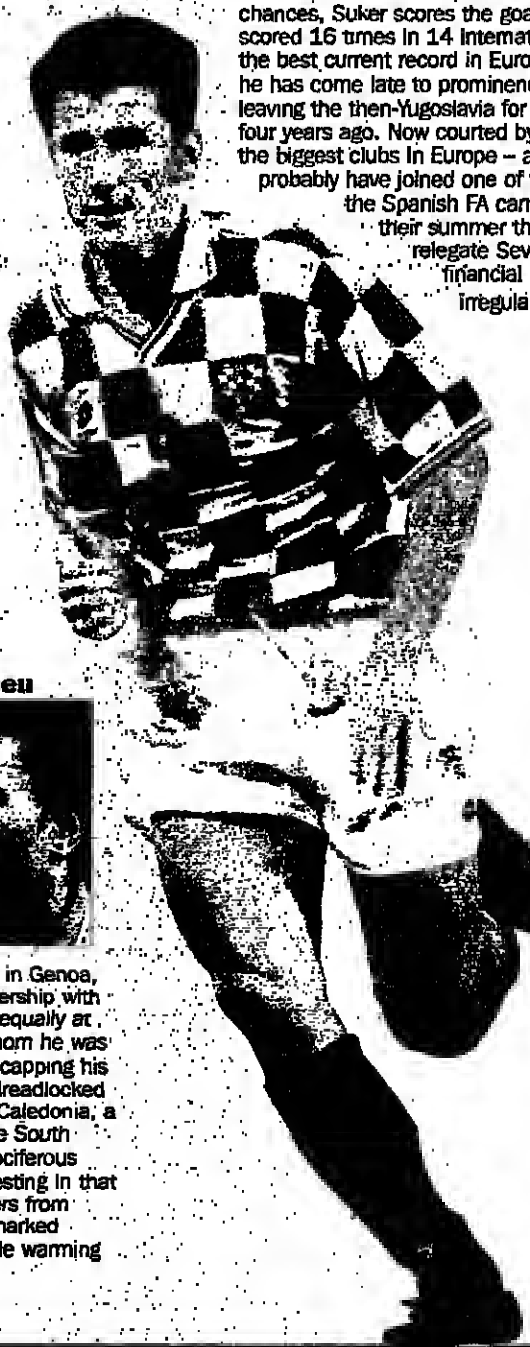
While Zvonimir Boban provides the chances, Suker scores the goals. He has scored 16 times in 14 internationals - the best current record in Europe. At 27 he has come late to prominence despite leaving the then-Yugoslavia for Sevilla four years ago. Now courted by some of the biggest clubs in Europe - and would probably have joined one of them had the Spanish FA carried out their summer threat to relegate Sevilla for financial irregularities.

Heiko Herrlich (Germany)

Tall centre-forward who moved from Borussia Mönchengladbach to Borussia Dortmund for a German domestic record £4.5m during the summer. Scored his first international goal, on his second appearance, against Wales last spring. Top scorer in the Bundesliga last year, and a German Cup winner. Has formed a good partnership with Klinsmann in the national team but has had problems with injuries. Aged 23 - shares his 3 December birthday with Karembeu.

Christian Karembeu (France)

Dynamic midfielder who joined Sampdoria from the French champions, Nantes, during the summer for £3m. Has settled quickly in Genoa, forging a promising partnership with Clarence Seedorf. Looks equally at home with France, for whom he was outstanding in Romania, capping his display with a goal. The dreadlocked 24-year-old is from New Caledonia, a French dependency in the South Pacific. He has been a vociferous critic of French nuclear testing in that area, even inspiring players from both sides to wear bibs marked "No to nuclear tests" while warming up for a Serie A match.



Brown builds platform for expansion

BY PHIL SHAW

S.C. O'BRIEN/DUNDEE

Paris and Copenhagen, Boston and Toronto. Some alluring stops punctuate Craig Brown's schedule, though even the draw for the preliminary rounds of the World Cup in the French capital is unlikely to excite the Scotland manager's interest as much as his trip to Birmingham five days later.

There, on 17 December, Brown will learn the who, where and when of Scotland's second successive appearance in the European Championship finals. Their qualifying campaign, which started with a sublime goal in Finland and ended with a ridiculous one gifted by San Marino, was not exactly *Braveheart II*, but it showed that the Scots will not easily be put to the sword next summer.

While "Hard to beat" is a far cry from the exhortations with which William Wallace inspired his Tartan Army, it fits Brown's footsoldiers well. They lost just one of the 10 Group Eight matches, to a dubious penalty in Athens that was one of only three goals conceded.

Brown, who took over near the end of a forlorn bid to reach the World Cup finals, deserves vast credit. "Had we failed in successive tournaments, it would've been pretty bad," he admitted in the aftermath of the 5-0 romp against San Marino. "There would've been a depression about the place."

Amid all the bleating and breast-beating about the collapse of Scottish clubs in Europe, Brown has displayed tactical nous and an ability to maximise relatively limited resources. "The team may not have been sparkling but it's

become efficient - against strong opposition. People say our section was weak, but Russia and Greece have sides at the top of their groups in the Champions' League."

Many supporters, notably those who hanker after a "personality" figurehead, will see Brown's assessment of their prospects as unduly downbeat rather than pragmatic. "We've got a job on our hands to get beyond the first phase," he said, aware Scotland have never achieved as much in either competition. "We must be honest about that, but we'll give it a go."

The role of rank outsiders has, however, traditionally suited the Scots psyche. If Brown can harness greater attacking threat to what is almost a comical midfield riches, while at the same time maintaining the new-found defensive solidity, their ambition need not be seen as fanciful.

Scott Booth, a scorer in each of his last four internationals at Hampden Park, is now first-choice forward. Pairing him with Eoin Jess, his Aberdeen colleague, worked well against the Sammarinese, but with the latter now playing in midfield for his club, the experience and track record of Ally McCoist or the power and unpredictability of Dundee Ferguson remain tempting options.

Unfortunately for Brown, his next opportunity to evaluate the permutations will not come until March, against opponents to be confirmed. The following month Scotland test their potential to do a Denmark against the European champions themselves, with preparations likely to be completed in late May by games in the United States and Canada.

A solid foundation being laid for future

Northern Ireland completed their European Championship campaign with a 5-3 victory over Austria at Windsor Park on Wednesday, and although the win came too late to rescue hopes of reaching next summer's finals, Nigel Worthington believes there is plenty to build on for the World Cup qualifiers.

Worthington, the Northern Ireland captain, said: "We have started to lay the foundations. These are exciting times as there are so many good young players coming through."

Worthington, who won the first of his 61 caps in 1984, two years after the World Cup finals, said: "We were flying then. It was a wonderful time for all Irish supporters. I think we now have the potential to get back to that

level. We just need to keep hitting away and working hard."

The European Championship campaign may be over, but Bryan Hamilton, the Northern Ireland manager, is continuing his football education in Cyprus this weekend by attending a UEFA coaching course. "I have learned a lot. I think I have become a better coach and a better manager," he said.

"I feel there is a wind of change taking place in Northern Ireland football. Priority must be given to improve our coaching and development programme. We must be positive and committed in our approach to work longer and harder with all our young players."

Pembridge points way

The header Mark Pembridge powered into the Albanian net in the despatch of Tirana's Qemal Stafa Stadium was crucial for Wales as it ensured they avoided the indignity of finishing bottom of Group Seven. It was equally significant for the 24-year-old Pembridge. Proving himself to the Wales manager, Bobby Gould, as a goalscoring midfielder could help secure his place in the Welsh side.

"In the modern game midfielders need to score and the system Bobby has brought in gives me licence to get into the box," Pembridge said. "If I can score every now and then it's got to give me a better chance of staying in the side."

WALLES

Pembridge's performance on a shocking pitch was outstanding. It was another 90 minutes example of the special talents of Ryan Giggs that was inspirational and made Gould aware all over again of what a rare gem he has at his disposal. "Ryan's under pressure all the time, he's a world superstar even in a place like Albania, but we want him to be able to relax when he's with us," said Gould. "What Gould certainly has achieved in his three months in charge is to raise the morale of the Welsh squad, something that could hardly have been lower in the final months of the Mike Smith era."

Charlton's 'home' help

Jack Charlton probably would not mind taking his Republic of Ireland team to Wembley in the European Championship, but not just yet. The Republic of Ireland manager is not about to surrender "home" advantage by agreeing to move his side's play-off match against the Netherlands away from a 41,000-capacity Anfield, even if playing there means thousands of Irish supporters having to stay at home.

"At Anfield it will be a home game for our Liverpool players Jason McAteer, Phil Babb and Mark Kennedy - if I pick them of course," Charlton said yesterday. "The crowd there is close to the pitch and the atmosphere will be a great help to us."

Louis Kilcynne, the Football Association of Ireland president, suggested an application for a switch to Wembley so that

PLAY-OFF
Netherlands v Rep of Ireland
Anfield, 13 December

more Irish fans - 20,000 of them travelled to Portugal for last night's 3-0 defeat - could buy tickets, but England have a match there, coincidentally against Portugal, the day before the 13 December play-off.

The FA's chief executive, Sean Connolly, said: "Maybe UEFA would have brought pressure to bear but we are not going to ask for a switch, Jack having stated his preference."

Charlton will test the co-operation of leading club managers by invoking the five-day international rule which gives him first call on players. Unlike last weekend before the Portugal defeat, there is a full Premiership programme on 9 and

10 December and Charlton is fearful that he will continue to have difficulty with players being withdrawn through injury.

"Thanks to Northern Ireland beating Austria we've been given yet another chance of qualifying and I don't want to see it squandered by players being pulled out again through injuries. We have had a horrendous time the last six months having to field weakened teams. I accept that as international manager I only borrow players from their clubs, but I've got to get every advantage I can this time," Charlton said.

Roy Keane will struggle to be fit after hernia surgery, but Ireland's captain, Andy Townsend, should be over his foot problem, having missed Wednesday's defeat, the worst in Charlton's 92-match reign.

Early buyers boost sales

LIZ SEARL

Although Euro 96 is still seven months away and the draw has yet to be made, more than 65 per cent of available tickets have already been sold.

England are the only team who know where they will be playing (at Wembley) in the group matches. If they proceed, England would play at Wembley or Anfield in the quarter-finals and Wembley or Old Trafford in the semi-finals. Wembley has now sold 86 per cent of its current allocation for all matches.

TICKETS FOR THE FINALS

Ticket prices for the tournament range from £15 to £135. It is only possible to buy tickets for the knock-out stages if tickets have also been bought for group games. This means that in order to purchase one ticket for the final, a minimum of £270 must be spent on a total of at least 11 tickets covering matches at all stages of the tournament.

A second tranche of tickets will be allocated after the draw on 17 December. Each com-

peting visiting team has been allocated a total of 7,000 tickets per match, with a larger allocation being made for the final.

Tickets may only be obtained by postal application. Forms are available from from any branch of Midland Bank.

TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE
Group A: Wembley 15, 16 and 17 June; Group B: Villa Park 15, 16 and 17 June; Group C: Old Trafford 15, 16 and 17 June; Group D: Anfield 15, 16 and 17 June; Group E: St James' Park 15, 16 and 17 June; Group F: Wembley 15, 16 and 17 June; Group G: Wembley 15, 16 and 17 June; Group H: Wembley 15, 16 and 17 June; Group I: Wembley 15, 16 and 17 June; Group J: Wembley 15, 16 and 17 June; Group K: Wembley 15, 16 and 17 June; Group L: Wembley 15, 16 and 17 June; Group M: Wembley 15, 16 and 17 June; Group N: Wembley 15, 16 and 17 June; Group O: Wembley 15, 16 and 17 June; Group P: Wembley 15, 16 and 17 June; Group Q: Wembley 15, 16 and 17 June; Group R: Wembley 15, 16 and 17 June; Group S: Wembley 15, 16 and 17 June; Group T: Wembley 15, 16 and 17 June; Group U: Wembley 15, 16 and 17 June; Group V: Wembley 15, 16 and 17 June; Group W: Wembley 15, 16 and 17 June; Group X: Wembley 15, 16 and 17 June; Group Y: Wembley 15, 16 and 17 June; Group Z: Wembley 15, 16 and 17 June; Group AA: Wembley 15, 16 and 17 June; 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FIRST TEST: Atherton gives valuable solidity as England offer hope for the series after recovering from another depressing start

Hick's sense of history averts crisis

Cricket

MARTIN JOHNSON
reports from Pretoria
England 221-4
v South Africa

When it came to making history yesterday, the fact that the last TV pictures of an England-South Africa Test match were broadcast in black and white was a reasonably strong contender, but compared to England failing to make a total porridge of the first day of a Test series, it was not really in the same frame.

Twenty-four hours into most recent series, England have effectively been history themselves, but after initially threatening to disappear down the same depressing plughole, Graeme Hick and Michael Atherton provided hope that England's batsmen versus South Africa's fast bowlers will not be the one-sided contest many people feared.

Atherton, whose long-standing back trouble may be partially due to the amount of times he has carried his team on it, made a typically stoical 78 before splicing the second new ball to gully, while Hick, whose expression range normally runs from blank to deadpan, was so delighted by a wonderfully positive fourth Test match century, that he only just stopped short of a series of handstands.

These two rallied England from a precarious 64 for 3, and if Atherton - who had grown visibly more weary after lunch - had managed to hang on until the close, it would have been an even more satisfying day. As for South Africa the only real bonus was a highly impressive debut from another fast bowling Pollock, Shaun.

As England, having preferred Richard Illingworth to Devon

Malcolm, would have batted first by choice had they not been invited to, their first Test match toss against South Africa for 30 years was something of an irrelevance. They will also have been relieved that the pitch was a long way from the trampoline that was forecast, even though Atherton - hit twice on the helmet and once on the shoulder - ended the day with a bruise and a headache.

The history of the occasion was slightly lost on the South African public, who turned up for the first Test between these two countries in 30 years in something closer to drabbles than droves. On top of which, if there was one black face in the crowd of 9,300, it was hard to spot among all the white and red ones.

Why this should have been so hard to say, although the fact that this match is being played in the mainly white region of what used to be called Verwoerdburg might have had something to do with it. A place with that kind of name would hardly have had blacks queuing up outside the estate agents' windows.

More likely, though, is the fact that the Test match culture was all but lost to the instant variety during the years of isolation, and a one-day froth society will need a bit of weaning back on to solids. Whether yesterday will have helped is a moot point, in that South Africa's attack is one-dimensional to the point of utter tedium.

However, their fielding is probably even more brilliant than Australia's, and the diving catch at backward square-leg to dismiss Alec Stewart off a full-blooded pull was close to unbelievable. What was even more remarkable was the fact that the fielder, Craig Matthews, spilled a relatively simple return catch offered by Hick on 67.

The fall of England's second wicket, at 36, did nothing to remove the suspicion that Mark Ramprakash has developed some kind of mental block at this level. It was a ghastly poke outside off stump at Donald, and in his 18th Test, Ramprakash managed to knock another small percentage off a miserable average of less than 18.

England's problems continued when Graham Thorpe, who for one reason or another had barely spent any time at the crease before this match, snicked a catch behind to provide young Pollock with his first Test wicket. England lunched at 64 for 3, and might easily have been driven into a shell of strokelessness.

The fact that they were not was gratifying for more than one reason. Centurion Park's electronic screen was in danger of exploding from gimmick overload every time a boundary was struck, and the idea of signalling a four with a cartoon of a woman removing her spectacles and then putting them back on, is certainly a novel one.

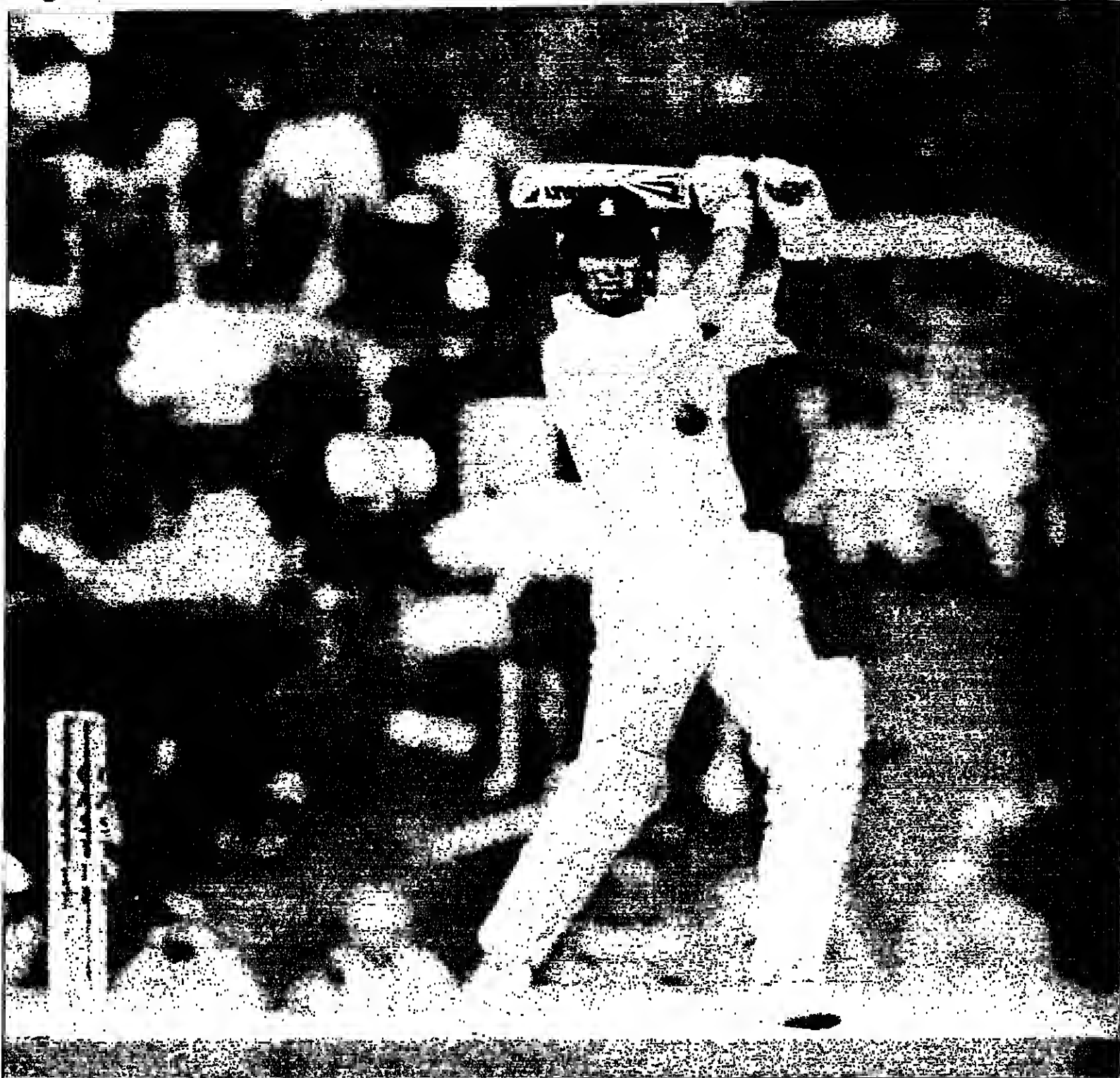
As spectators were also invited to perform the tiresome Mexican wave (happily without success) by a moustachioed character in a sombrero, with the word WAVE flashed up in capital letters, this might provide some idea of South Africa's idea of subtlety.

By far the best example, though, is a TV advert in which a hare-bottomed Will Carling lookalike clambers into the Princess of Wales' bedroom, only to find he has been beaten to it by the entire South African rugby team.

Neither was there much subtlety about the way South Africa bowled to Atherton and Hick to particular, but while Atherton battled away in largely heroic defence for five and a half hours, Hick was unrecognisable as the timid character he often looks when cricket balls are fizza past his visor.

Allan Donald and Pollock were always a handful, but Hick was impressively dismissive of the distinctly undangerous back-up team of Brett Schultz, Matthews and Brian McMillan. Hick's first delivery, a no-ball from Pollock which he pawkily spliced out on the leg side, gave no hint of the spanking he was about to deliver.

Hick's ability has never been in question, merely his character. This was the first time he has done it for England in a crisis and, to give the man his due, it was not far short of brilliant.



Staying power: Graeme Hick drives through the covers during his century at Centurion Park yesterday

Photograph: Graham Chadwick/Allsport

'I had a lot to prove to people and myself'

Graeme Hick's fourth Test hundred yesterday provided some welcome evidence that he is coming to terms with pace bowling at Test match level.

Last summer's three-figure contribution against the West Indies on a low, slow Trent Bridge pitch left a question mark over Hick's technique when facing quick bowling. But here, there was enough bounce to keep South Africa's five fast men - led by Allan Donald - interested. They

tried plenty of bouncers but Hick responded with 21 boundaries in his priceless, unbeaten 105.

"Playing fast bowling has been something I've worried about in the past," Hick admitted. "But it's not anything that really bothers me."

If that sounds contradictory, the Worcestershire batsman was altogether easier to follow during his four-hour innings. Since being dropped at Old Trafford last summer, Hick has

responded with Test scores of 118 not out, 7, 96, 51 not out and now an unbeaten 105. At last, the player who has dominated county cricket is showing his worth at Test level. "I was very disappointed to be left out during the summer and had a lot to prove to people and myself after that," he said.

"I thoroughly enjoyed the day and think it was quite an important hundred."

However, Hick's contribution was not the only highlight

as England recovered from 64 for 3 after being put in, Mike Atherton's innings of 78 proving equally as crucial.

"He played very well," said Hick, after his stand of 142 with Atherton. "We've had a good day - it would have been a superb day if Mike was still at the crease."

For South Africa, electing to field first with an all-pace attack did not have the desired effect of wreaking havoc with the England batsmen.

"We took a gamble," admitted Bob Woolmer, their English coach.

"We hoped the pitch would be more conducive to seam and swing but the ball did not go sideways all day."

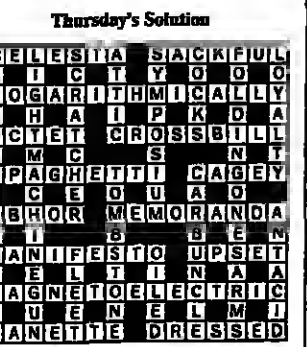
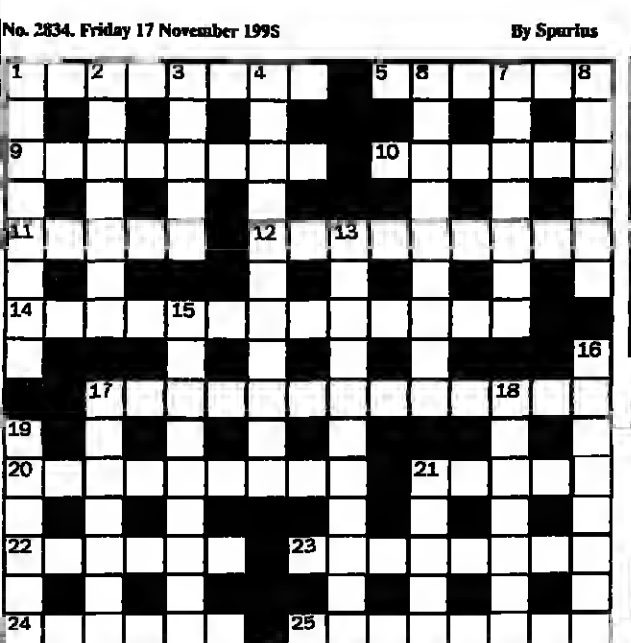
"Hick and Atherton played superbly and really got stuck in after lunch."

That's what Test cricket is about. But our bowlers kept at it and a couple of quick wickets in the morning will make it look a different game."

Scoreboard

First day: South Africa won toss	
ENGLAND - First innings	
M A Atherton c Donald b Pollock	78 (358 min, 200 balls, 10 fours)
A J Stewart c Matthews b Schultz	6 (35 min, 22 balls, 1 four)
M R Ramprakash c Richardson b Donald	9 (32 min, 19 balls)
G P Thorpe c Richardson b Pollock	13 (48 min, 29 balls, 2 fours)
A Hick not out	105 (234 min, 175 balls, 22 fours)
R A Smith not out	1 (12 min, 5 balls)
Extras (b5, w1, nb3)	9
Total (for 4, 362 min, 84.3 overs)	221
SA - First innings	
Fak 1-34 (Stewart), 2-36 (Ramprakash), 3-64 (Thorpe), 4-258 (Atherton).	
To bat: M R Ramprakash, D G Cook, D Gough, R K Illingworth, A R C Fraser.	
Bowling: Donald 20-8-39-1 (w1) (5-2-4-0-3-1-1), 5-2-8-0, 5-3-10-0, 2-0-13-0; Schultz 13-4-45-1 (6-2-16-1), 3-0-14-0.	

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1 Fellow in wrecked car is scornful (8)
 - 5 Cut article on southern Cyprus (6)
 - 9 Sheets showing configuration of Nile bend (3, 5)
 - 10 Standards old character associates with Indian Civil Service (6)
 - 11 Sphere's actual mass (5)
 - 12 Look, mate, resistance is useless - I'm a skilled worker (9)
 - 14 Believe story offered by retailer (valued customer)? (6, 7)
 - 17 Derive calculus increment that's definite, after reworking (13)
 - 20 Minor burn? (9)
 - 21 Object to night in Paris being finally cancelled - it's a bore (5)
- DOWN**
- 1 French, I appreciate, on reflection, will be unresponsive (6)
 - 3 Pull a fast one, introducing an improvisatory composition (8)
 - 24 Persuaded to include information in story (6)
 - 25 Revealing bit of Swiss folklore? (4, 4)
 - 1 Journalist given pamphlet to take away (8)
 - 2 Troops having time to receive one broadcast (7)
 - 3 A certain element's starting off in disgrace (5)
 - 4 Dance in which you don't move at all? It's a bell! (7, 4)
 - 6 Puma foreign aristocrat traps in America (9)
 - 7 Broke, stupid, when on outskirts of encampment (7)

- Guarantee clubs will be freed from blame (6)**
- Arrange in give talk about Queen on the box (11)**
- Economic problem assumes increased dimension (9)**
- Sensitive meeting involving Marxist and Conservative (8)**
- Popular hero, brave, with large heart (7)**
- Drunken seaman, one in a state of oblivion (7)**
- Advantageous ruse Fulham overlooked in some extent (6)**
- Former pupil about in crack up (5)**

Football

PHIL SHAW

Officials of an Italian Serie B club, Ancona, met last night to decide whether to press assault charges against unspecified Birmingham City players following violent clashes after an Anglo-Italian Cup tie on Wednesday.

The "Battle of Ancona" left the local club's coach, Massimo Cacciatori, nursing a fractured cheekbone and an eye wound. Cacciatori, who was taken to hospital but did not require surgery, alleged that his injuries were inflicted by Liam Daish, the Birmingham defender, during a fracas in the dressing-room area after an ill-tempered match.

Reports from Italy suggested that police may seek the extradition of as many as four members of the Birmingham party. Under Italian law, criminal proceedings are automatic if an individual is certified unfit to work by a doctor for 20 days or more. Conviction for assault can carry

a prison sentence of up to three years, but if Cacciatori is given less than 20 days to recover, he can sue his alleged assailant(s) only through the civil courts.

A spokesman for Ancona maintained that Cacciatori had been "punched and butted" during an "outrageous" attack. He added: "What's happened has happened. We've referred the case to the Italian League, and we will make up our minds calmly over the next few days."

Meanwhile, the Football League confirmed that it is likely to set up a commission of inquiry into events during and after Birmingham's 2-1 win. The League expects to receive a report today from the referee, John Lloyd of Wrexham, who also needed hospital treatment on two fingers injured as he sought to break up fighting in the tunnel after the match.

The only British newspaper journalist present, Colin Tatum of Birmingham's *Evening Mail*, reported yesterday that he saw Cacciatori run on to the pitch to strike one Birmingham player,

Paul Tait, and seize another, Ricky Otto, round the throat. He also witnessed the substitute, Jae Martin, being poked in the eye by an Ancona player.

No arrests were made, and Daish denied striking Cacciatori. "If that's what they want to say, let them. Nothing happened," Daish said. Television pictures showed the coach being wheeled away on a stretcher, evidently with face wounds.

Barry Fry, the Birmingham manager, initially handed his opposite number "a disgrace" for his alleged incursions on to the pitch, but by the time Birmingham's plane landed in Britain, the normally effusive Fry was tight-lipped. The club secretary, Alan Jones, issued a terse "no comment" yesterday.

The Anglo-Italian Cup has suffered from poor crowds and disciplinary problems since being resurrected in 1992. Only 800 spectators, including 92 Birmingham fans, were at Wednesday's match. Ironically, the clubs could well meet again in the final at Wembley next spring.

Leeds finally get their man

Thomas Brolin's transfer from Parma to Leeds should finally go through today for £4.5m, a record for the Yorkshire club. The fee - £600,000 of which Leeds will pay immediately and the rest over two and a half years - will also be a Swedish record.

Brolin, who played for Sweden in Stockholm on Wednesday, was due in Leeds last night and could make his debut at home to Chelsea tomorrow.

Parma had announced that the move was off because the 25-year-old Brolin had failed to agree personal terms. However, Bill Fotherby, Leeds' managing director, said: "Parma have been back to me to say the deal is on. I have been confident

all along that the transfer would go through."

Brolin, who will play as an attacking midfielder for Leeds, has played only three games for Parma this season and his career has been in the doldrums since he broke a foot a year ago.

Sheffield United have been barred by the Football League from making any signings until they repay £50,000 borrowed from the Professional Footballers' Association to pay the team's wages last week. The League's action prevented the Leeds United winger David White from joining on loan yesterday.

David Webb, the Brentford manager, has called in the police after being drawn into the

transfer "bungs" row. Webb was last week alleged to have accepted a £20,000 payment from Terry Venables when he was Southend United's manager and Venables was at Tottenham.

The claim was made in court by Jeffrey Fugler, who is suing Venables for £20,000 which he says is owed to him for a marketing deal.

Webb now believes there is a dirty tricks campaign being waged against him, including phone taps. "I am appalled at the campaign against Terry Venables and the use of innocent bystanders like me to destabilise his position," he said. "I'm fed up and will be reporting the matter to the police and the football authorities."

Cardinal's Intestine was one name suggested but Bishops Finger sounded so much more mouthwatering.



THE SERIOUS BEER WITH THE SILLY NAME.